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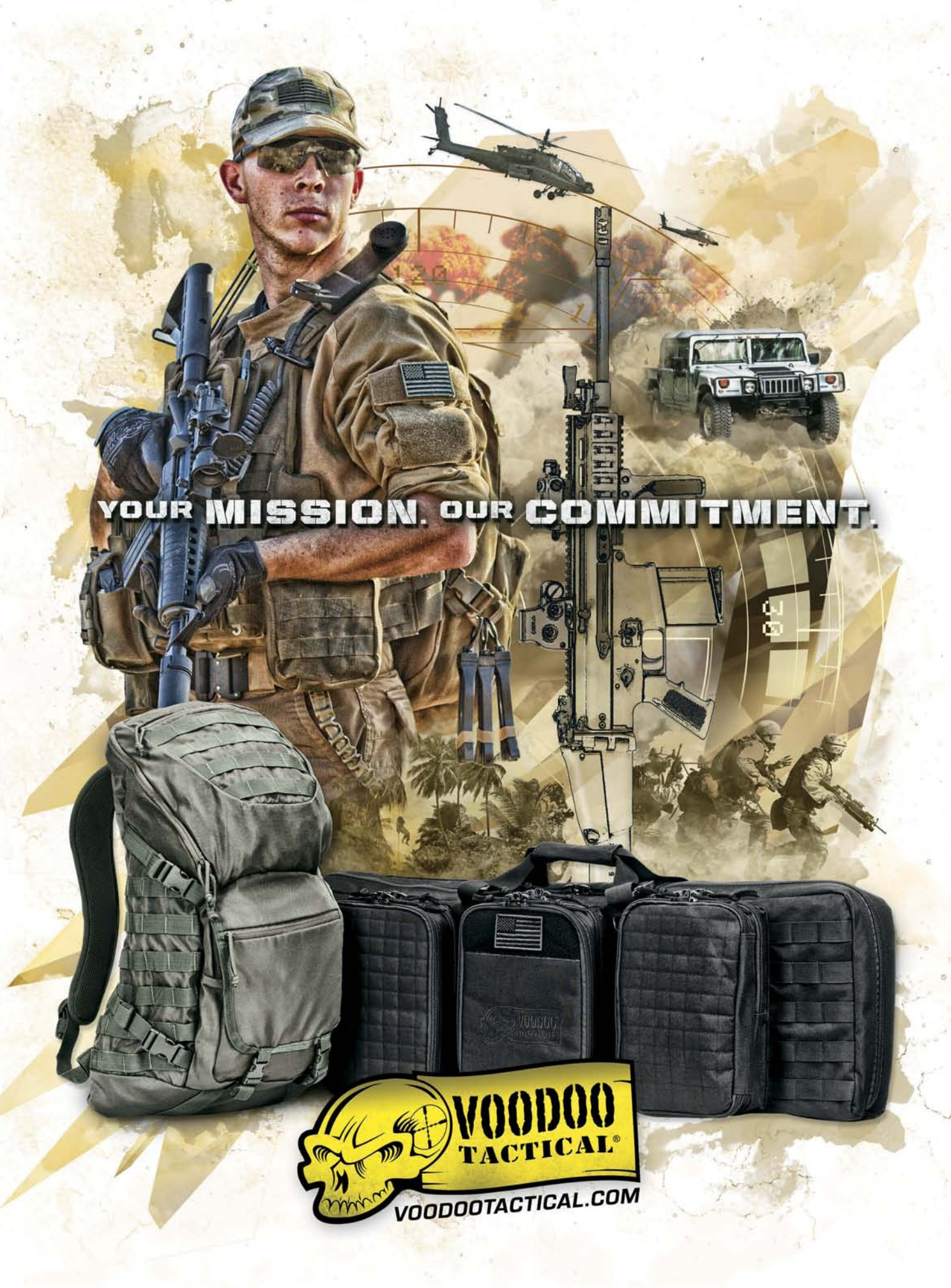
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By David Cook


TACTICAL TRAINING

COMBAT MINDSET

DEVELOPING THE "ULTIMATE WEAPON" IS ONE OF THE KEYS AT THE TRAINING COMPLEX

BY DAVID COOK / PHOTOS BY SUZANNE MILLER

THE MIND IS THE ULTIMATE WEAPON. MINDSET IS THE CONSCIOUS OR SUBCONSCIOUS WILLINGNESS TO COMMIT HARM (LETHAL OR NON-LETHAL) AGAINST ANOTHER.

When engaging in combat, mindset – more often than not – will be the determining factor as to success or failure, regardless of technical proficiency. Anyone can train in a martial skill, but few have the mind and will to use their skills for killing or inflicting serious injury.

Mindset's partner is "mental trigger," and this trigger is the defining moment that forces you to engage your opponent with the goal of injury or death.

Throughout the training, we impress on students what they are really training for – to save their own lives or the life of a teammate and to visualize or adversary aiming a weapon at them.

The adversary visualization increases the intensity, seriousness and productivity of the training session. When a weapon malfunctions or a shooter makes a mistake, there is no "going admin." Students are coached to stay in the fight until the engagement is over and the threat is eliminated.

Our weapons training programs are the primary vehicles to teach a combat mindset to students here at The Training Complex.

LE & CIVILIAN & MILITARY

Combat mindset is defined as the awareness and willingness to apply the appropriate level of force and prevail – including up through the use of deadly force when justified.

In law enforcement or civilian parlance, this philosophy is most often expressed and taught as a use of force continuum and is primarily governed by the actions





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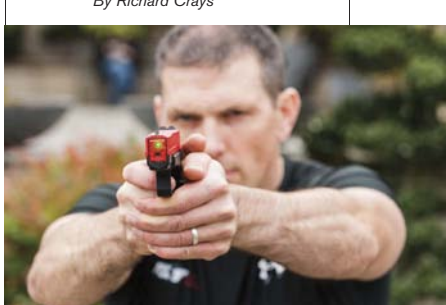
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Editorial / BY DAVID DOLBEE

SCARS OF BATTLE

IT IS REALLY QUITE SIMPLE.

Tactical Training is designed to meet the needs of tactically minded members of the military, law enforcement, special operators and everyday civilians. After all, the world is simply too unpredictable; no one is safe to simply wait out a call for assistance. Perhaps, it never was. After all, how many years ago did Jeff Cooper devise his States of Awareness?

To make sure you are prepared and ready, we have gone to the country's foremost experts.

In the pages that follow, you will find topics such as low-light tactics. Danny Pritbor, who operates the Firebase Combat Studies Group, outlines the best tactics for a light and defends its use by pointing out the strengths of weapon-mounted and offhand lights.

Injured? Think you are ready to continue the fight one-handed? Ever try brushing your teeth with your non-dominant hand? Still think you are ready to shoot offhand? A long-time law enforcement officer, Richard Crays, introduces you to the topic that you better get familiar with. Real fast.

Another LE officer, Bob Campbell, drives home great tips in short-range marksmanship. Greg Thompson, a Gracie Jiu-Jitsu black belt under Royce Gracie, reveals some state-of-the art moves that the Special Forces use on a daily basis.

And that's just some of the content. Having the right gear is akin to a force multiplier and Tactical Training is chock full of must-have accessories and firearms, including range reports, field tests and buyers guides.

Whether a seasoned professional, green recruit or Three Percenter, you have an amazing opportunity to learn from some of the world's best. The author's bios mean less than the scars they obtained when answering the call where others faltered.

Sit down, shut up and pay attention. The pages of Tactical Training may be the edge you need to win your next SHTF moment. **TT**

> **"THE AUTHOR'S BIOS MEAN LESS THAN THE SCARS THEY OBTAINED WHEN ANSWERING THE CALL WHERE OTHERS FALTERED."**

TACTICAL TRAINING

SPRING 2015

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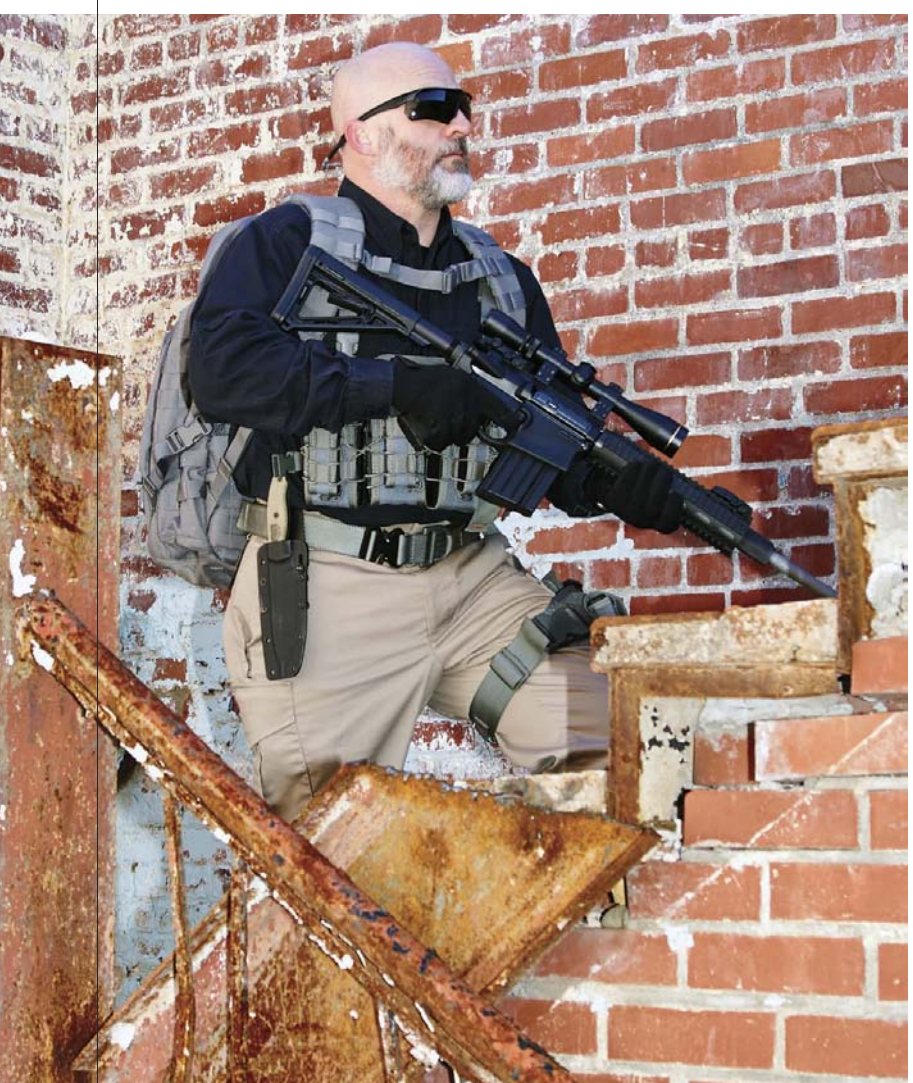
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PHOTO BY TERRILL HOFFMAN

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NUTRITION

HUMAN KINETICS /

TITLE: SPORTS NUTRITION GUIDEBOOK \ COST: $19.95 \ LENGTH: 461 PAGES

WHETHER YOU'RE IN LE, THE MILITARY, security or just enjoy shooting, nutrition can play a role in your performance. In the following excerpt, Nancy Clark, MS, RD, discusses the importance of hydration. *– Editor*

Fluid needs vary greatly from person to person, so it's hard to make a one-size-fits-all recommendation. Sweat rates commonly range between one and four pounds per hour, depending on your body size, intensity of exercise and clothing; weather conditions; whether or not you are heat acclimatized; and how well-trained you are.

On a daily basis, the simplest way to tell if you are adequately replacing sweat loss is to check the color and quantity of your urine. If it is dark and scanty, it is concentrated with metabolic wastes, and you need to drink more fluids or eat more foods with high water content, such as cooked oatmeal, yogurt and fruit.

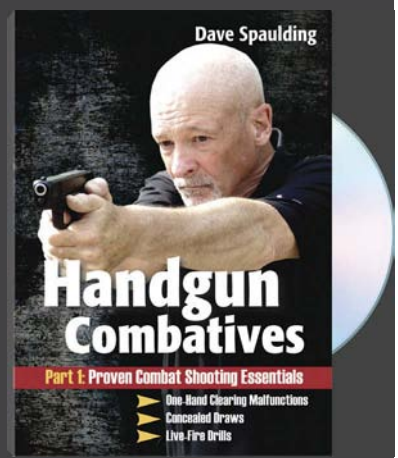
When your urine is a pale yellow, your body has returned to its normal water balance. Your urine may also be dark if you are taking vitamin supplements.

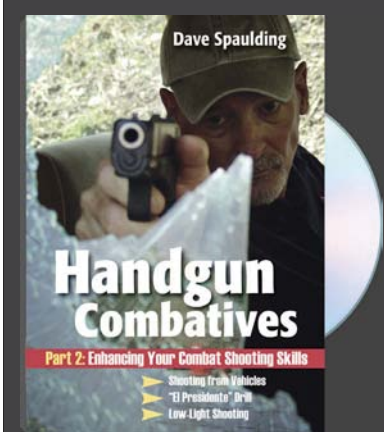
In addition to monitoring urine and weight loss, you should also pay attention to how you feel. If you feel chronically fatigued, headachy or lethargic, you may be chronically dehydrated. This is most likely to happen during long hot spells in the summertime.

DVDS

PALADIN PRESS /

TITLE: HANDGUN COMBATIVES \ COST: $54.95 \ LENGTH: 375 MINUTES \ PALADIN-PRESS.COM





THIS THREE-VOLUME SET IS GOLD. Dave Spaulding, former LE, is one of the most knowledgeable instructors in the country. These three videos comprise nearly 400 minutes of quality instruction.

In Part 1, Spaulding explains how to master essential skills that determine whether you will prevail in an armed encounter. Topics include grip, stance, weapon retention, concealed draws, seated shooting to live-fire drills.

Part 2 transitions to more advanced scenarios, including from vehicles, in low-light or inconsistent lighting, extreme close quarters, to the rear or when clearing a building in a one-man-entry operation.

Stopping power is covered in Part 3.

Stop what you're doing and order these.

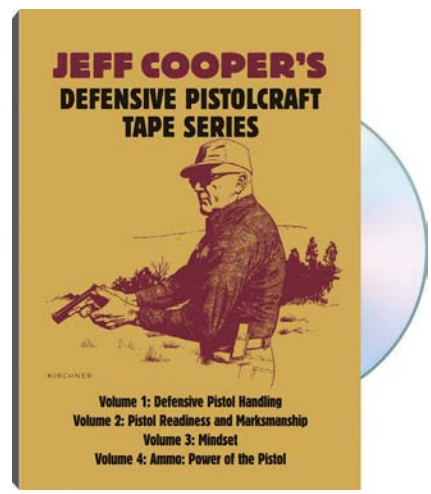
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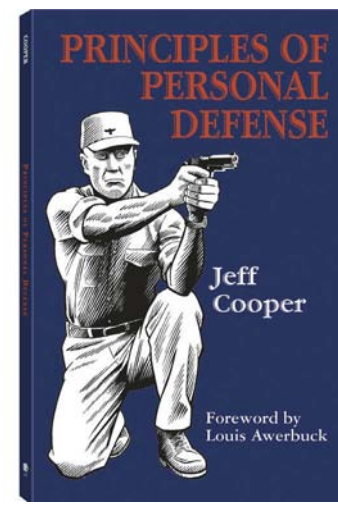
PALADIN PRESS /

TITLE: JEFF COOPER'S SHOOTING SET \ COST: $56.95 \ LENGTH: 200 MINUTES/80 PAGES \ PALADIN-PRESS.COM

LEARNING FIREARMS FROM JEFF COOPER IS LIKE LEARNING BASKETBALL from Michael Jordan.

In this package, Cooper provides practical instruction on defensive weaponcraft and safety and his ideas on defensive mental conditioning. Many say the book is the best on mental conditioning written. Ever.





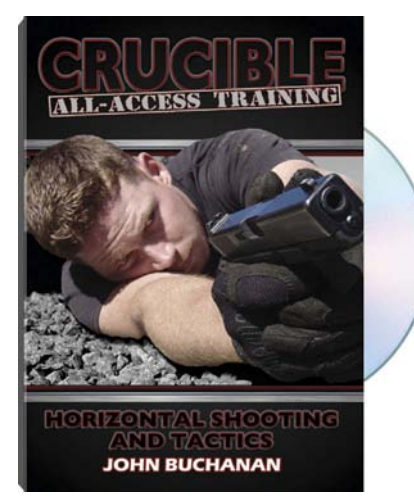
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PALADIN PRESS /

TITLE: CRUCIBLE ALL-ACCESS TRAINING: HORIZONTAL SHOOTING AND TACTICS \ COST: $49.95 \ LENGTH: 80 MINUTES

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED. That's why John Buchanan discusses strategy and techniques of shooting from the ground. In this 80-minute video, Crucible head firearms instructor John Buchanan provides the tips you need to survive, such as how to position yourself properly to deploy your weapon under stress, the tactics to use when you find yourself underneath your opponent, how to successfully fire your weapon when behind cover and the mindset needed to change tactics when you find yourself on the ground.

Be prepared.





■ A lowlight neck index flashlight shooting technique is shown here.

LOW LIGHT OPERATIONS

EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT AND SAFE USE OF TACTICAL LIGHTING

BY DANNY "GATOR" PRITBOR / PHOTOS BY JESSE CLEMENTS

STATISTICALLY, THE MAJORITY OF VIOLENT CRIMES OCCUR DURING THE HOURS OF DARKNESS.

In whatever capacity you carry a firearm, you'll eventually find yourself working in low- to no-light conditions. People have an inherent fear of the dark; working in lighted conditions is where our comfort zone lies. Thus, many see low light environments as a disadvantage. But once we understand and apply the principles of operating in low light (LL), we can adapt and prevail in any lighting condition.

CULLING THE MINDSET

Ultimately, the desired result is to triumph in the fight, not just survive. To win, our mindset must be proven with a clear understanding of the OODA loop (Observe, Orient, Decide and Act), while recognizing the conditions of the environment, using efficient low-light techniques and understanding the threat's perspective.

OBSERVE, ORIENT, DECIDE AND ACT

Humans make decisions based on the information we're able to gather through our five senses. Since most of that information is gathered through our eyes, maintaining the ability to observe in low light conditions is absolutely critical. Shutting down our opponent's ability to observe is equally important. Properly processing data as we observe it requires us to be in the right frame of mind before entering the OODA cycle.



■ While aligning the muzzle and the eyes, students use UTM handguns to practice placement of the lights in the threat's eyes.

First, we start with the Cooper color code.

WHITE - No situational awareness, "oblivious."

YELLOW - Situational awareness is "switched on." You are observing the environment in relaxed alert.

ORANGE - You are "keyed in" to a possible threat and processing solutions.

RED - You are acting on the threat in "fight or flight" mode. You are able to make decisions.

BLACK - "Panic" mode in which you are unable to react properly due to being caught off guard. (Condition white can lead to condition black.)

In the OODA cycle, you must at least be in condition yellow to observe. If you

DID YOU KNOW?

300 FOR EFFECTIVENESS, THE NUMBER OF LUMENS THE AUTHOR PREFERS FOR FLASHLIGHTS.



■ When searching, you should be in a weapons posture, ready to engage threats at all times.

PRINCIPLES OF LOW LIGHT

GENERALLY MOVE TO THE LOWEST LEVEL OF LIGHT:

- Move quickly when moving from well-lighted areas to low light areas
- Use a short burst of light and then move
- Paint a path prior to moving
- Use random heights when using light source
- Make intermittent use of light
- See from the threat's perspective
- Follow: light move/shoot move
- When a threat is located, "power up" your light do not "power down"
- Avoid target fixation when the threat is located

are not observing properly, you will have difficulty moving on in the cycle.

While operating in LL, infractions such as improper weapon postures, sight fixation, erratic head movements or moving faster than your ability to observe and process will hinder you from seeing the big picture. After there is a commitment to act, the situation is changed and you are at the top of the cycle again.

In LL, some orientation takes place before observation. Your view of the environment is limited by what you observe through ambient and artificial light. This article is geared around a single-person-clearing situation, where your rear and surrounding security is not covered by friendlies.

MOVEMENT WITHOUT OBSERVATION EQUALS DEATH

Properly working a white light in conjunction with a firearm requires a great deal of practice, as well as knowledge of how to read the lighting in the environment. You must understand what the threat sees down range of your light.

Through the years, firearms instructors have come up with various shooting techniques for purposes of merging a white light and firearms. Some of these techniques have their uses, but I will limit this piece to three specific handgun techniques: Modified FBI, Harries and Neck Index (see sidebar). Once learned, most will gravitate to these while under stress. An additional advantage is that all three techniques use the same hand position on the light.

When selecting a light for personal defense, ensure you opt for a compact one with a tail cap on/off switch, with the maximum lumens your budget will allow. I prefer a minimum of 300 lumens. During high stress, the mind and body likes continuity,



■ The author demonstrates one person low light clearing.



■ This is a low light FBI-modified flashlight shooting technique. This is ideal for searching, as it keeps the light away from the vital areas of your body.

efficient movement and less fine motor skill. I have instructed low light courses where we teach just about every low light shooting technique known. Yet, when students are put in force-on-force scenarios and the stress is turned up, they use the techniques they can flow in and out of with minimal hand manipulation.

SEARCHING FOR THREATS IN THE DARKNESS

When you are in the active threat environment, you are either searching and scanning for threats or addressing and/or covering a threat. Let's take a closer look at these two modes.

You do not need much light to navigate. Once you illuminate an area, you can see if it's free from obstacles. Determine your next position; move there in the dark. Read the lighting conditions. If your light comes on, move from the position with your light off so as not to telegraph your location.

The typical solution to low light is to place a light on a weapon, turn it on, and be ready for action. There are many cons to this method, which are readily observable when put to the test. In order to understand why activating and leaving a weapon-mounted light on is not always the best option when searching, you have to understand what the threat sees.

Keep in mind the OODA loop. As soon as you activate your light, your location is identified, possibly placing the threat in the OODA loop ahead of you. At minimum, the threat has observed and oriented to your position. In the instant your light came on, if you did not locate and observe the threat, you are behind in the loop. This brings me to some key principles of low light operations.

Principal #1: If your light comes on, you move. If you shoot, you move or you change position.

Principal #2: The rule of 3 – never light or shoot from the same location three times.

Principal #3: Horizontal and vertical displacement of the light as well intermittent use creates chaos on the receiving end.

Principal #4: Align the eyes, muzzle and light to any low light shooting technique. When searching, you should be in a weapons posture, ready to engage threats at all times.

Principal #5: Carry more than one light. One is none; two is one!

We vet these principles in force-on-force training. It is common to see the bezel of the light get shot out and trainees take multiple hits to the face. The light becomes a huge target indicator and threats tend to fixate on the light

TECHNIQUES

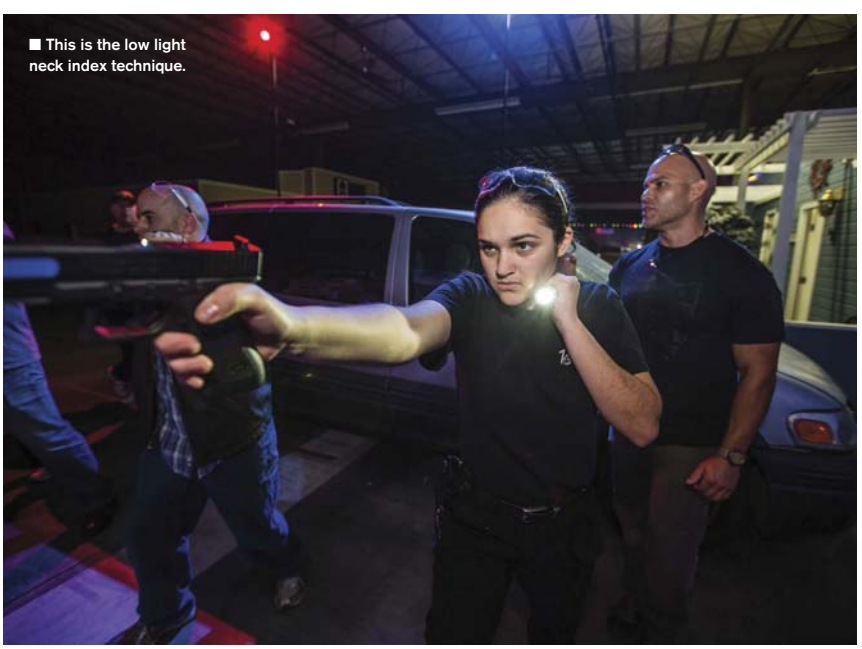
Modified FBI - Place the handheld light in the palm of the support hand with the thumb over the tail cap switch. Close the grip of the hand and form an ice pick-like position. Extend the support arm overhead and place the light out away from the body. The light can vary in position, but avoid moving the light close to the head while searching. This position allows for ease of movement when changing the horizontal and vertical displacement of the light. This requires practice, as aligning the light, muzzle and eyes can be tricky.

Harries – Use when a threat is located. As with the Modified FBI, start with the light in the support hand and form the ice pick position with your thumb over the tail cap. Cross the support hand under the master hand, pressing the back of the support hand against the back of the master hand. Use isometric tension to stabilize the position. This is one of the best techniques for aligning the light, muzzle and eyes.

Neck Index - Use when the threat is located. With your support hand, form the ice pick position with the hand held light, thumb over the tail cap switch. Pull the light in toward the support side jaw line making contact. Lock the position in place so wherever the head moves the light moves making it one unit. This is a quick position to get in and out of. It will illuminate the sights of your handgun – especially helpful if you are not running tritium sights.



■ Students engage in low light dry practice using the Harries flashlight technique.



■ This is the low light neck index technique.

when they shoot. If you look at the typical weapon-mounted light on a handgun or rifle, and the weapon is at extended ready, the shooter's face is directly in line and behind the light. There is a time to turn on your weapon light but I am convinced it is not while searching for threats.

When searching, I prefer a handheld light using the Modified FBI Technique (see sidebar). This method places the light out and away from vital areas. It also provides the ability to work the light at different angles, bouncing the light off the walls and ceiling, constantly changing what the threat sees from their perspective. The objective is to create a level of chaos with the light serving to disorient the threat. This effect cannot be created with a weapon-mounted light, as it compromises the shooting





■ As Danny Pritbor looks on, a student practices a modified FBI technique.



■ Danny Pritbor says properly working a white light in conjunction with a firearm requires a great deal of practice.

platform. A handheld light is extremely versatile, mobile and deceptive when properly deployed.

When the threat is located, power with light. When moving to a threat control mode, you can switch techniques, moving to a Harries or Neck Index (see sidebar). If you are running a weapon-mounted light, now would be the time to power on. It is important to place the hot spot of the light in the threat's eyes. The objective is to take them out of the OODA loop by essentially taking their ability to observe – disorienting them. If possible, move to cover or a position of advantage.

Identify what is in the threat's hands; get them to raise their hands high away from their waistbands. If you are alone, do not get fixated and remember, you cannot give up your surrounding security for long. Keep scanning for threats. The advantage of running two lights is you can use your handheld light to quickly check your 6 o'clock and surroundings, while keeping a weapon light on the primary threat.

All of these techniques need practice – and plenty of it. Start with a cleared weapon and work through the three positions. There should be progression to live fire. Once the skills are solidified, they should be validated with force-on-force training and professional instruction in order to establish confidence in the techniques you have selected for personal use.

Until next time, stay safe and remember to "train as if your life and those around you depend upon it." **TT**

FOR MORE INFO

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■ The Range Complex is located in North Carolina.

COMBAT MINDSET

DEVELOPING THE "ULTIMATE WEAPON" IS ONE OF THE KEYS AT THE TRAINING COMPLEX

BY DAVID COOK / PHOTOS BY SUZANNE MULLEN



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Throughout the training, we impress on students what they are really training for – to save their own lives or the life of a teammate and to visualize an adversary aiming a weapon at them.

The adversary visualization increases the intensity, seriousness and productivity of the training session. When a weapon malfunctions or a shooter makes a mistake, there is no "going admin." Students are coached to stay in the fight until the engagement is over and the threat is eliminated.

Our weapons training programs are the primary vehicles to teach a combat mindset to students here at The Training Complex.

LE & CIVILIAN & MILITARY

Combat mindset is defined as the awareness and willingness to apply the appropriate level of force and prevail – including up through the use of deadly force when justified.

In law enforcement or civilian parlance, this philosophy is most often expressed and taught as a use of force continuum and is primarily governed by the actions

(or inactions) of the aggressor. In concept, the law enforcement officer or citizen is generally allowed to elevate their level of force at one level higher than that displayed by the aggressor up and through the use of deadly force. The overall objective in a law enforcement or civilian application is to use only the minimum amount of force necessary to contain the situation and place the aggressor into protective custody.

In military applications, this philosophy is expressed and taught through approved Rules of Engagement (ROE), the Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), and agreed upon Laws of War, such as the Geneva Convention. In concept, the soldier is allowed to use up through deadly force against specified threats. The overall objective in war time military applications is the capture or killing of enemy combatants.



THE BEGINNING

Founded by two former Army Special Operations soldiers, The Range Complex (TRC) is a training and security consulting company located in Autryville, NC.

Drawing largely from more than four decades of combined tactical and military experience, spanning from the tumultuous world events of the 1990s through the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Subsequently, TRC's business model was designed to address shortcomings in tactical training standards that have been brought to light since the events of 9/11.

Their ultimate goal in setting up such a company was simple yet dynamic: Instruct police, military and select members of the American public using the same training methodologies designed to forge some of the military's top special operations personnel. These techniques are not conceptual, they are reality based and combat proven, with all of the company's top-notch instructors themselves former special operators, each having accrued many years of recent "downrange" experience.



THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A WARRIOR MINDSET ARE CONTINUOUS TRAINING, MENTAL PREPARATION AND REAL LIFE EXPERIENCES ..."

■ The weapons training programs are used to teach a combat mindset to students.

Although force is a measurable attribute, the military application is intentionally vaguer and better suited to the variances and fog of warfare. The law enforcement or civilian application is much more open to legal scrutiny and thereby restricted and constrained.

What is the net result? Military and law enforcement mindsets are different by design. Although both require the same individual will to prevail, the law enforcement officer is in the public eye, expected to follow the letter of the law, and subject to both criminal and civil sanction for any deviation from procedure or exercising of wanton force. Simply put: law enforcement officers face a far greater degree of restriction and constraint in their ability to use force.

MENTAL CONDITIONING

For the soldier, law enforcement officer or armed civilian, the required mindset equates to the conscious and subconscious willingness to commit harm up through the use of deadly force against another person.

The mental conditioning begins with an understanding of human physiology; variances in state of mind affect the release of hormones, resulting in changes of behavior and the capacity to physically and mentally perform. The greater the perceived danger or threat, the larger the release of fight or flight hormones into the bloodstream.

Up to a point, these hormones are beneficial and improve the individual's chances of survival. After a point (i.e., sheer terror), these hormones can shut down rational thought and basic motor function. Although these physiological responses cannot be eliminated, they can be harnessed and focused through



■ Instructors, many of whom are retired Special Forces, oversee the training.

TRC'S TRAINING METHODOLOGY

TRC instructors repeatedly posit that, "There are no such things as advanced shooting skills, only perfect execution of the fundamentals under stress."

How do instructors introduce this stress into the training environment? One way to do this is by incorporating a shot timer into every training scenario. This makes the events take on a naturally competitive air, and by having other students watch the scenario, the firer is placed into a stressful situation.

In keeping with TRC's training mentality, J.D. (one of TRC's instructors), described the proper rifle training mindset by stating, "The rifle should be no different than the samurai's long sword. You should train with it in all capacities and its use should be as natural as breathing."

This, in turn, frees up the cognitive areas of the brain to process the "fog of war" and releases the operator from burdening himself with the minutiae of weapons handling when seconds truly count.

Many of the techniques taught are innovative and reflect paradigm shifts from previously held beliefs, while the foundation still lies within basic marksmanship fundamentals. For example, TRC teaches a much more aggressive shooting stance than is the current practice, where the



■ Brilliance in the Basics are stressed at the facility.

shooter is basically squared up to the target in an almost defensive position.

In sharp contrast to the norm, the TRC instructors teach the students to stand in a slightly bladed fighting stance, with the support arm placed far forward on the fore end of the weapon. By way of explanation, the instructors describe the reason for the adaptation of this technique in the following manner:

"By supporting the weapon (with the support hand) by the magazine well or by a forward vertical grip affixed close to the weapon's center of gravity, the firer is, in essence, trying to write his name with a 'pencil' held only by the eraser end," an instructor says.

By firmly gripping the forend of the weapon close to the barrel (as three-gun shooters do), the shooter can effectively "drive the gun" from one target to the next. While this does expose a portion of the firer's armpit to the target, TRC instructors maintain that, "The gunfighter should not count on the enemy's marksmanship skills to save his life, but on his ability to put rapidly aimed shots on the target."

Aggressiveness is the key to surviving any shooting engagement, and this is one situation with which many police departments are now faced. In post-Columbine America, it is no longer acceptable to set up a perimeter and wait for S.W.A.T. to arrive. Patrol officers are now being trained to aggressively move to the sound of gunfire within a structure, and to then neutralize the threat(s) to innocent life.

training, mental preparation, and repeated exposure to threatening situations either by way of realistic scenario based training or immersion.

The best explanation I have come across for categorization of readiness mental states was made by "Jeff" Cooper more than 30 years ago and is still being taught to law enforcement and military special operations forces today. Cooper's mental states are defined in conditional form, and they are as follows:

White: Unaware and unprepared.

If attacked in Condition White, the only thing that may save you is the inadequacy or ineptitude of the attacker;

Yellow: Relaxed alert.

Your mindset is that "today could be



■ Instructors provide close instruction to students.

the day I may have to defend myself." You are simply aware that the world is a potentially unfriendly place and that you are prepared to defend yourself, if necessary.

Orange: Specific alert. Something is not quite right and has your attention. Your radar has picked up a specific alert. You shift your primary focus to determine if there is a threat. In condition orange, you set a mental trigger.

Red: Fight. Your mental trigger has been tripped.

In warrior speak, I would add the following to Cooper's conditions; they are as follows:

White: This is a state of mind rarely used by a person who has been properly trained and conditioned in warfare or who is serious about their survival as a law enforcement officer. Use is generally limited to a very secure environment and

FOUNDATIONAL TRAINING PRINCIPLES FOR EXCELLENCE

1 **TRC uses an outcomes based training methodology called "Brilliance in the Basics," which combines classroom instruction, talk-through/walk-through rehearsals, live-fire range training and scenario based force on force training to teach students how to think – not what to think.**

This training methodology teaches expertise in basic individual skills and then trains in realistic, ambiguous scenarios that force students to not only exercise their individual skills, but to also solve problems and make tough 'life and death' decisions in a stressful training environment.

2 **TRC's weapons training programs focus on teaching students how to place two rapidly aimed shots on an adversary before he can do the same to them. The training methodology takes the complex task of tactical shooting and breaks it down into smaller, more manageable sub-tasks (building blocks) that can be trained on and perfected in isolation before they are chained together. The training begins with the ability to place a single well-aimed shot on a single target.**

THE STAFF

TRC's team is comprised of former special operations trainers from 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment – Delta, Special Forces, Special Mission Units – and elite law enforcement organizations. TRC's instructors have the training methodology, practical experience, expertise and trainer skills to prepare students to survive violent and potentially deadly encounters.



■ Instructors teach students how to think – not what to think.

is never utilized when under arms.

Yellow: Standard mode of operation. The warrior or law enforcement professional is alert, relaxed, and actively scanning his or her environment for anything out of place, unusual or potentially threatening. Condition yellow is the minimal operating mindset when under arms.

Orange: For the warrior or law enforcement professional, this equates to the perception of direct or indirect exposure to attack or harm. The mindset switches to tactical with the realization that the use of force – up through deadly force – may be necessary. Concurrently, "what if" contingency planning commences and continues for the duration of exposure. Condition Orange produces the highest levels of mental and sensory awareness.

Red: The threat is real and attack or harm is underway. The warrior or law enforcement professional is willing and able to apply deadly force and prevail – if required. Survivability is now directly correlated to the sum of their experience and training.

"STUDENTS ARE COACHED TO STAY IN THE FIGHT UNTIL THE ENGAGEMENT IS OVER AND THE THREAT IS ELIMINATED."

BUILDING BLOCKS

The foundation of a warrior mindset is the intense will to improve, to excel and to prevail. The building blocks of a warrior mindset are continuous training, mental preparation and real life experiences. The net result and what truly defines a highly effective soldier or law enforcement officer are: wisdom, self-confidence, self-awareness, and yes, humility. **TT**

FOR MORE INFO

THE RANGE COMPLEX
www.TheRangeComplex.com
(910) 208-4383



■ The Solo Soldier Self-Defense is just one Greg Thompson teaches.

360-DEGREE PREPARATION

TO FIGHT TERRORISTS, THE U.S. ARMY SPECIAL FORCES EMPLOYS GREG THOMPSON'S REALITY-BASED PROGRAM

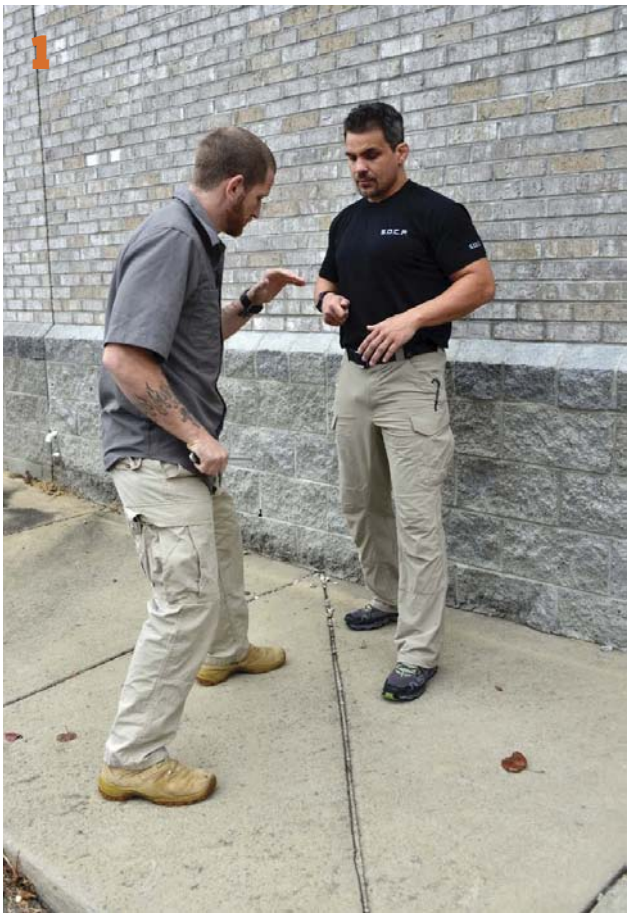
BY DOUG JEFFREY / PHOTOS BY BOB SADLER

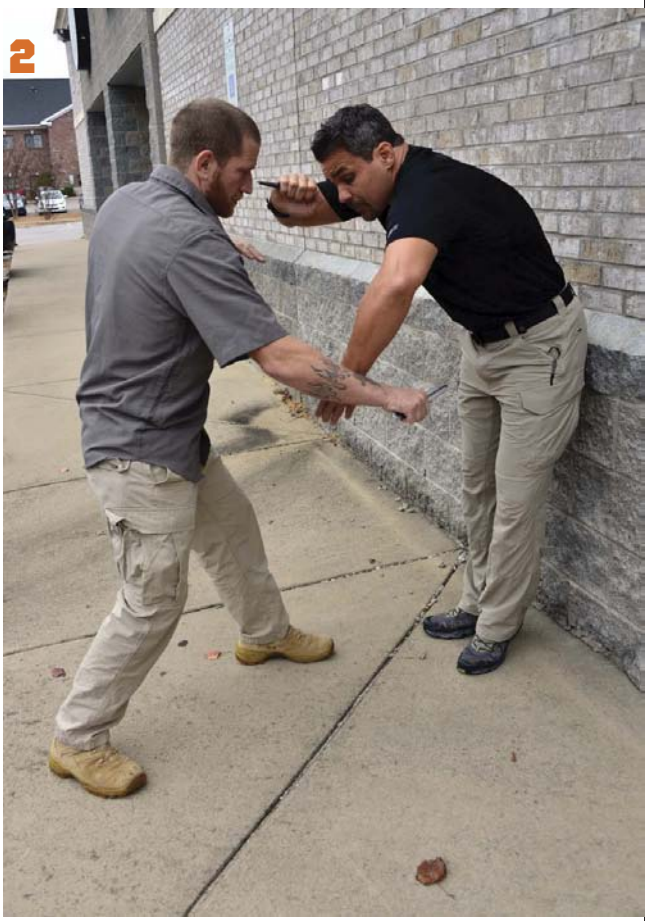
FOUR PASSENGER PLANES HIJACKED, CLOSE TO 3,000 DEAD AND SOME $10 BILLION IN PROPERTY DAMAGE. IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE ANYTHING GOOD RESULTED FROM THE SEPT. 11, 2001 TERRORIST ATTACKS ON THE UNITED STATES, BUT THERE IS. GREG THOMPSON'S SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMBATIVES PROGRAM (SOCP) RESULTED FROM THAT DEVASTATING DAY.

After the attacks, Special Operation Forces set out to destroy the terrorists' infrastructure and key leaders. When our Soldiers returned to the United States, they relayed to Thompson the problems they encountered. Using a near constant feedback while working with Special Operations Forces, Thompson analyzed the information, formulated strategies and developed a protocol for fighting, cuffing and handling prisoners in kit (body armor).

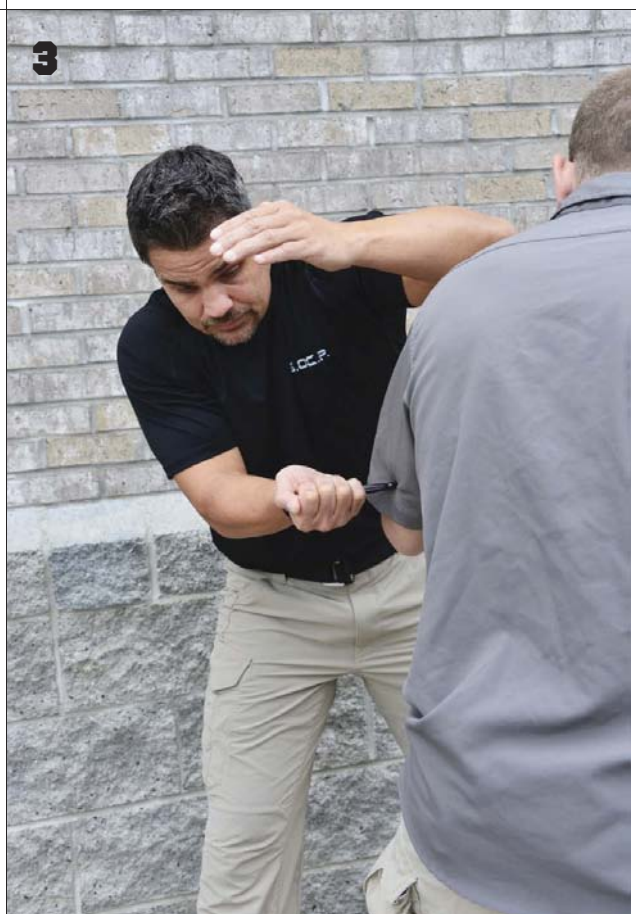
On March 23, 2010, SOCP, which is primarily an assaulter-base system that gives the operator the basic technique and fighting tactics needed, became the first combatives program officially designated for all U.S. Army Special Operations Forces. The program directly enhances the fighting qualities of our current and future special operations personnel and ensures there will always be a combatives program for the special operator, and it is uniquely attuned to his changing requirements.

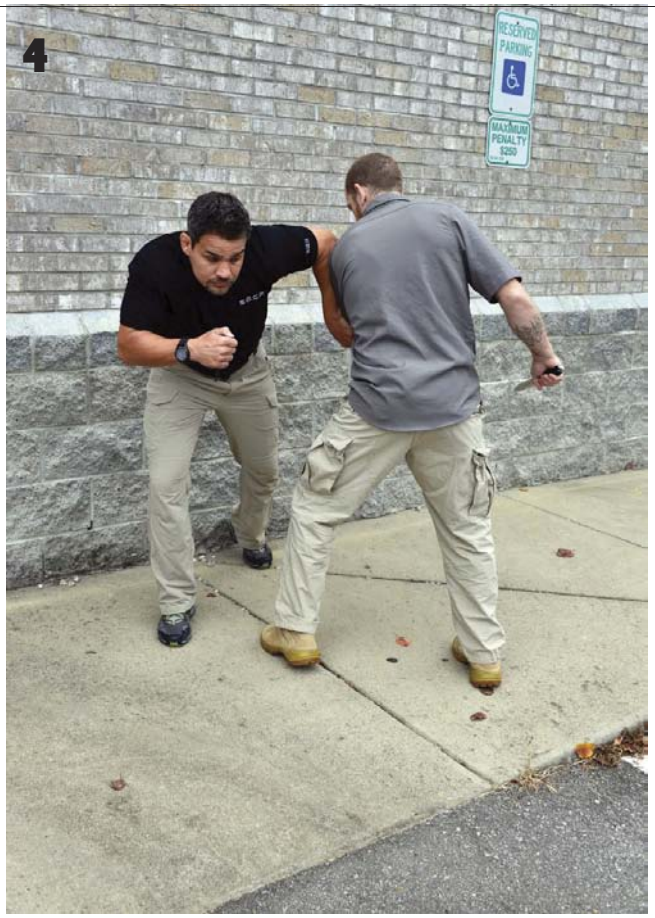
Over the last several years there has been less assaulting in kit and more traveling and meeting abroad. Soldiers are traveling alone and have to abide by the local laws of the host country. In some





■ **1** In this sequence, Greg Thompson (dark shirt) demonstrates a move with a tactical weapon, as this may be all he has or there may not have been time to deploy another weapon. Note that the attacker's empty hand is in front and the weapon is in his rear hand. Thompson has to be mindful of the attacker grabbing him and jamming him into the wall, so he is assessing the situation. ■ **2** While Thompson defends the assault, he goes straight for the throat or eye with the pen. Simultaneously, he is shielding his body from the knife and moving out of the way, as he hollows out at the core to get as much distance as possible. These situations happen so fast that the reactions have to be instinctive, says Thompson.







■ **3** Once Thompson executes the stab to the face, he rotates his arm and reaches behind the attacker's elbow while also stabbing the attacker's triceps. Thompson can then maneuver the attacker's arm across his body to clear it out of his way like a linebacker clearing an offensive lineman to get by so he can get to the quarterback. ■ **4** When the attacker's elbow moves across his body, this takes the leverage out of his stab. Thompson then moves him out of way, which also makes it hard for the attacker to grab him. Notice how Thompson "rides" the attacker's elbow so he can't turn and grab him. ■ **5** Thomson can now run create space so he can get a weapon or move to safer location.

countries, that means no weapons at all. So, out of the SOCP, Thompson developed a specific program based on the needs and concerns of the soldier. He called the program 3SD (Solo Soldier Self-Defense).

Welcome to Greg Thompson's world.

TACTICAL TRAINING: 3SD is your Solo Soldier Self-Defense program. What does it entail?

GREG THOMPSON: This type of training – which entails fighting, disengaging, escaping multiple assailants solo or as a team, escaping in and around vehicles, environment assessment, weapon transition and retention while standing or on the ground, training in 360-degree ambush attacks, knife fighting, makeshift and improvised weapons and more – finds its origin in feedback from soldiers who traveled all over the world. It also includes the martial arts of MMA, boxing, Thai boxing, wrestling, Gracie Jiu-Jitsu and blade offense/defense.

This type of training is geared for small groups with as little as one or two guys while they are traveling abroad. They might be gathering information, in a meeting gone bad or maybe they have encountered local thugs bent on robbery.

TT: What makes the program unique?

THOMPSON: There are hundreds of self-defense programs around today that have good techniques, but that is all most of them teach. We have to train for the before, during and after the confrontation, as well as use of force with their hands or whatever weapon is used. If the soldier has a knife, handgun or improvised weapon, he should have an excuse for having it. We believe they should always be armed with something, even if it's an improvised weapon.

We do not have a lot of time to train so we focus on techniques and tactics that are easy to digest and instinctively replicated in scenarios. The scenarios are the most important thing we do. It is how we train someone to make good decisions.



> **"OF COURSE, THEY CAN KICK IN A DOOR AS AN ASSAULT FORCE, BUT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THEM TO MAKE SURE THEY DO NOT OVERREACT TO SITUATIONS. LESS-THAN-LETHAL OPTIONS ARE IMPORTANT."**
> **—GREG THOMPSON**

THE PROGRAM'S GREATEST CHALLENGES

The hardest thing for me is not to teach them too much in one course. It is possible to put too much on their palette. If there are too many items in their Rolodex of answers, it can take to long for them to get to the answers. The techniques have to be simple and effective. We focus on perfecting the most likely techniques.

From there, we just add aggression. Most of the soldiers have been in major conflicts so we have to add individual use of force.

TT: If they can't always be aggressive, what is the strategy?

THOMPSON: Just like SOCP, everything from pre- to post-encounter has to be designed and executed with good judgment decisions. It is not how good of a shot they are or how well they fight; it is how they work as a two- or five-man team. That is how to win. They have to know what everyone is going to do tactically as a team. When you play basketball, you have five guys. When there is better communication, everyone will do better.

In 3SD training, it is important not overreact to the situation. Less-than-lethal options are important. When defending



■ **1** If possible, it's always better to exit a vehicle unless it cannot be done, because a vehicle can become a death trap, he says. Other factors come into play, of course, such as there may not be time to exit the vehicle or someone else may be outside the vehicle. In this scenario, Thompson is forced to fight. While he pushes the assailant's arm away at the elbow, he clears the seatbelt with his other arm. By pushing the elbow away, it is harder for the attacker to reach him.

THE MASTER'S STUDENTS

- Green Berets
- Rangers
- Air Force PJ's
- MARSOC Marines

themselves, they may not want to go lethal because that can draw too much attention. If they have to, of course, they will. A lot of these soldiers are used to going lethal under the old rules of engagement. However, while in another country, they have to abide by the rules of that country and their use of force of that country.

TT: Take us into the preparation.

THOMPSON: In the course, we create four or five scenarios that could happen and make them more complex. In some of the best scenarios we run, they do not even fight. They have to recognize when to engage and when not to fight. That is where judgment comes to play. We give them ideas so they can make better judgment decisions. We give them tactical knowledge, which they can then put in their Rolodex of answers to access later. Without that knowledge, they probably are not going to come up with a great answer when they are in the moment under duress.

TT: In the program, you talk about a task-specific skill set for the special operations soldier. What does that mean?

THOMPSON: Some programs teach tactics that are not likely to be needed





■ **2** Thompson transitions to the handgun and gets in position to get a shot. Note that Thompson still is controlling the attacker's elbow, and he has positioned himself higher in the vehicle by wedging his feet against the floor. Getting higher than his opponent allows him to change angles. ■ **3** This shot shows the action from the other side of the vehicle. Notice how Thompson has driven himself behind his opponent so he can get the shot.

or are not practical for the special operations soldier mission. The information has to link to what you're doing, and it can't have too many moves. Tactics and procedures have to be simple and digestible within the time they have to train.

TT: When you talk about linkage, what does that mean?

THOMPSON: Technique linkage is when a soldier uses moves that allow him to flow to another technique when needed. Think of it as a tree; some branches you can climb out on allow you to move to other branches, and others leave you stuck with no options.

TT: When working as a team, the program requires them to fight, disengage and escape multiple assailants, solo or as a team, in and around vehicles and or escaping a hotel room?

THOMPSON: Correct. When fighting as a team or solo, they will be around objects and/or in a vehicle or hotel for instance. In all of these situations, they must think tactically. If they are with someone, they need to know how the other person is going to react. They have to think as a team and fight as a team. The only way they can fight as a team is to have the same objective. Is it to run, fight or talk their way out? This is why tactical scenario training is so important.

If you are at a restaurant with your family and someone starts shooting up the place, you may have a plan. However, if your wife and kids don't know it, they may react or run in separate directions. You will probably have to come up with a plan on the spot. Task-specific tactics are everything. Tactics must change with the environment. When fighting, disengaging in and around



■ **1** The principles of this technique can be utilized in a variety of positions: 1) Working from an under hook position with the soldier's head between centerline of the combatant and the weapon.

"... WE CREATE THREE OF FOUR THINGS THAT COMMONLY HAPPEN AND RECREATE THAT AND MAKE IT MORE COMPLICATED."







■ **2** Flare your elbow up against the inside of the combatant's elbow. ■ **3** While keeping your elbow up, slide your arm through with palm facing out while moving to an outside collar tie up. ■ **4** While stretching the combatant's arm out, you can soften him up with some knees. ■ **5** While pulling high retention with your handgun you will be able to line the barrel up to the combatant's hip girdle region and discharge the weapon.



obstacles, they have to know how to change their tactic for the environment.

TT: You said one of the big areas is weapon transition and retention and 360-degree ambush attacks.

THOMPSON: We spend a lot of time in these areas. When on assignment, they should always be armed with something. In a hostile environment, if they do not have something to use as a weapon, they are being negligent. Even if it is a pencil or book bag, they have to understand how to use it to their advantage. If they are carrying a handgun, knife or improvised weapon, they need to be able to retain it and transition to it from any position. We have to train them to win the scrambles. Odds are, if you lose the initial scramble you will lose the fight.

TT: Your training also includes makeshift weapons.

THOMPSON: There is a difference between a makeshift weapon and an improvised weapon. A makeshift weapon is primarily one that a guy in jail creates. For us, it's

> **"WE GIVE THEM TACTICAL KNOWLEDGE, WHICH THEY CAN THEN PUT IN THEIR ROLODEX OF KNOWLEDGE." — GREG THOMPSON**

THE FOUNDATION FOR A PROGRAM

When developing a program, Greg Thompson said the following three items are key factors in his planning:

1. How much time he has with the student
2. The student's ability
3. The rules of engagement and the tools they will use

primarily improvised because improvised is easier to find and to explain why you have it. It's important for them to be mindful of the laws of that country. Maybe it's a box-cutter or a knife, but they have to be prepared to explain why they have it if the local authorities stop them.

TT: Understandably, most think of Special Forces as the military's elite. What are they like?

THOMPSON: What really separates the elite soldier from an average person is the right mindset and an understanding of what they are doing in every environment. It takes the type of person who can make good moment-to-moment decisions. **TT**

FOR MORE INFO

SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMBATIVES PROGRAM
www.ussocp.com
Greg@socp.info



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THE ART OF NOT BEING NOTICED

DIVERSION CARRY BAGS FOR EVERY BUDGET

BY DAVE DOLBEE

OPERATORS HAVE LONG SEARCHED FOR ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF CARRYING THEIR GUNS AND GEAR COVERTLY. SQUARE OR RECTANGULAR GUN CASES SECURED THE WEAPONS WELL ENOUGH, BUT THE OPERATORS WERE STILL BEING PICKED OFF IN PUBLIC. COVERT WAS STILL TOO OVERT.

The solution was to modify everyday items that could be carried in public without being noticed. In truth, the concept isn't new. Who hasn't seen a movie where a gangster carried a Tommy gun in a violin case? The same principle has the tactically minded on the same quest.

MODERN APPROACH

Today's difference is that manufacturers have embraced the concept. Whereas a pinstriped suit and violin case would stick out about as much as parachute pants and a fanny pack from the late '80s, a woman carrying a specially designed concealed carry purse would not. Dress the part and a tennis racket case easily holds an SBR while headed to the park or country club. Casual business attire will allow you flexibility and freedom of movement, and a messenger bag will not look out of place among a sea of professionals at the coffee shop, lobby of a business or on a bus.

While covert on the outside, the new generation of purpose-built covert bags are all business on the inside with attached holsters, MOLLE loops, lashdown straps and dividers for multiple items, or an upper and lower, for instance or mag pouches. Even bags in traditional military or surplus colors are commonly accepted on college campuses and among today's youth. Thanks to the mall ninjas, this means you can carry tactical looking gear and fit in better than truly covert carry items would allow.

The bags serve more than simply sufficient to carry in public. Alternative carry bags allow you to have a firearm in your car without alarming passengers. Likewise, passersby or dog walkers with wandering eyes may scan past an innocuous and dirty backpack in the backseat of a car, but a gun case can peak suspicion.

The same is true for a trooper at a traffic stop. Logically, you will inform as necessary when CCW, but it is best by handing over your driver's license and CCW in a controlled manner and not yelling, 'I have a gun,' or waiting for an observant officer to ask you first.

Whether you find yourself in need of an alternative method of carry today, you never know what is around the corner in term of needs in the future. Similar to a concealed carry holster, not one bag will fit every situation just as one holster may not suffice. However, bags need to be broken in. The operator needs to train and become familiar with the equipment. What are your tactical requirements? How quickly will you be able to deploy your firearm in an emergency? The situation will dictate your requirements, but *Tactical Training* will get you started with the following shopping list.

BLACKHAWK! / PRODUCT: DIVERSION CARRY BACKPACK / WEBSITE: BLACKHAWK.COM / MSRP: $99

BLACKHAWK! UNDERSTANDS THE KISS principle (Keep It Simple Stupid) with its introduction of the Diversion Carry Backpack. No frills for fancy features to muck up the works or give you away. The Diversion Carry Backpack's only feature is a hidden weapon compartment with access through a half-moon pad on the back panel making this casual backpack design ideal for carrying concealed in style.

TOP FEATURES

- Constructed of 420 denier velocity nylon (BKRD, GYBK, GYBL) or 500 denier nylon (RGCT)
- Internal loop panels for attaching hook-back holsters, pouches or accessories
- Ambidextrous zipper access to main compartment
- Padded divider to separate contents inside main compartment
- Large front zipper pocket with key lanyard and additional smaller pockets
- Slash pocket across entire pack front



MAXPEDITION / PRODUCT: MONSOON S-TYPE GEARSLINGER DECBOGO / WEBSITE: MAXPEDITION.COM / MSRP: $165



THE MAXPEDITION MONSOON S-Type Gearslinger is built to exceed military standards. Maxpedition Backpacks are made to be the most reliable and ergonomic available. Comfortable straps and padding provide a steady connection. Durable PALS exterior webbing allows for expansion and customization. Hardware and zippers by the most trusted and proven names in the industry including Duraflex and YKK. Fabrics are triple coated with polyurethane for weatherproofing, and a final layer of DuPont Teflon is applied to shed water. Reinforced for heavy use and water resistance.

TOP FEATURES

- 15 channels of PALS webbing
- Zippered compartment with interior loop field to accommodate 100oz/3L hydration reservoir with tube port or CCW
- Rubberized headphone port
- Button-lock security strap
- Integral grab handle made from 1" webbing
- Overall size Approx. 16"(L) x 20.5"(H) x 5.5"(W)

Product Guide



MAXPEDITION / PRODUCT: VESPER MESSENGER BAG /

WEBSITE: MAXPEDITION.COM / MSRP: $165

THE MAXPEDITION #0623

Vesper addresses an overwhelming number of customer requests for a messenger-style bag that incorporates a removable, padded 15-inch laptop bag. Both the interior and exterior components are laden with organizational features and may be used together or independently. A rear luggage-handle strap makes transportation simple when traveling through airports while an adjustable waist belt keeps it ready for action at your destination.

TOP FEATURES

- Teflon fabric protector for grime resistance and easy maintenance
- Denier water and abrasion resistant lightweight ballistic nylon fabric
- High tensile strength composite nylon thread (stronger than ordinary industry standard nylon thread)
- 16.25"(L) x 6"(W) x 13"(H)
- 2" x 8.5" padded loop for rolling luggage handle, can double as a carry handle
- 6" x 2" loop field for patches or name tape

"WHILE COVERT ON THE OUTSIDE, THE NEW GENERATION OF PURPOSE-BUILT COVERT BAGS ARE ALL BUSINESS ON THE INSIDE ..."



5.11 TACTICAL / PRODUCT: COVRT TRIAB /

WEBSITE: 511TACTICAL.COM / MSRP: $170

A QUICK AND COVERT sling backpack, the COVRT TRIAB remains subtle and inconspicuous right up to the last moment. The one-strap backpack design allows ambidextrous carry and easy shoulder switching, and a large main compartment offers multiple admin pockets for organization, a hydration compartment for your water bottle, and a fleece-lined sunglass pocket. A quick access sidearm pocket is hidden at the back, and comfortable compression straps enhance comfort while keeping your gear stable and secure. When you need a low-profile sling backpack that performs in both casual and tactical environments, the COVRT TRIAB is the ideal choice.

TOP FEATURES

- Reinforced grab-and-go handle
- Quick access pistol pocket
- Shooting or sunglass pocket
- Hydration compartment
- Flip down ID panel
- 500D / 420 Nylon

DESIGNER CONCEALED CARRY / PRODUCT: PALISADE / WEBSITE: DESIGNERCONCEALEDCARRY.COM / MSRP: $329



WOMEN ARE WAY AHEAD OF MEN WHEN IT comes to stashing items in bags. Designer Concealed Carry is leading the competition by constructing a high quality offering that fits a woman's fashion and protection needs. The Palisade handbag is one example, but features a lemon yellow Python Embossed exterior. The dual adjustable straps allow left- or right-handed access making it functional for LEOs.

TOP FEATURES

- Size: 11.5" High, 12" Long, 5.5" Wide
- Expands to become a classic open tote
- Double, adjustable shoulder straps (up to 16-inch drop) with antique gold buckles
- Decorative antique gold logo medallion closure with magnetic snap on flap
- Flat pockets on front & back, one with pleats & loops to secure spare magazines
- 7+" opening on locking dual zippered holster pocket for right & left handed access
- Inside features: zippered pocket, 2 open pockets, slots for cards, key hook, extra loops to secure pens, baton or flashlight, pepper spray

5.11 TACTICAL / PRODUCT: COVRT M4 SHORTY / WEBSITE: .511TACTICAL.COM / MSRP: $110

A SMALLER, ACCELERATED VERSION OF 5.11'S ORIGINAL M4 covert rifle bag, the M4 Shorty offers the same inconspicuous appearance and tactical utility in a compact, lightweight frame. Designed to support operations that require high mobility and a low profile, the M4 Shorty is a small, sturdy rifle bag that features a unique 5.11 R.A.C. (Roll-down Assault Compartment) for immediate and unrestricted access to a tactical firearm. Internal foam padding at the top and sides, a padded muzzle cup, and integrated weapon retention straps ensure safe, stable, and secure carrying in any environment. The ambidextrous shoulder strap design includes a QuictTact accessory strap for enhanced functionality, and an external go bag compartment provides plenty of space for additional magazines, optics, or accessories.



TOP FEATURES

- Covert rifle case with Integrated R.A.C.
- QuickTact accessory strap
- Dual-zip 180 degree access on front and main compartments
- External compartment sized for a 5.11 Bail Out Bag
- Reinforced grab and go handles
- Durable Duraflex hardware

Product Guide



DESIGNER CONCEALED CARRY /

PRODUCT: MESSENGER STYLE IBAG II / WEBSITE: DESIGNERCONCEALEDCARRY.COM /

MSRP: $335

DESIGNER CONCEALED

Carry's Messenger Style iBag II is sleek stylish and designed to be carried by a man as well as a woman. In fact, as soon as I opened the box, my wife snatched up the iBag and asked if it was a late Christmas present for her or me. Perfectly sized, the padded interior divider separates & protects eTablets or a small computer, while the seven-inch opening on the exterior access locking zippered holster pocket. Two zippers for right- or left-handed access. 10-inch inside width allows room to secure other safety items with access from the opposite side zipper. Sturdy leather pulls on the zipper sliders.

TOP FEATURES

- Size: 10.5" (H), 13.5" (L), 3.5" (W)
- All leather exterior, sturdy cotton lining
- Full width pocket on the front under the flap includes sturdy stretchy loops to secure spare magazines.
- 57 inches long, 1.5 inches wide cotton-webbing strap adjusts from shoulder to cross body length.
- Antique brass hardware, magnetic front flap closure.
- Removable holster, which adjusts to fit various sizes of handguns, attaches securely to both sides of the holster pocket.
- Inside features: zippered pocket, three open pockets, slim pocket for pens, slots for cards, key hook, stretchy loops secure baton or flashlight, pepper spray, spare magazines.





BLACKHAWK! / PRODUCT: DIVERSION WAX CANVAS SATCHEL

/ WEBSITE: BLACKHAWK.COM / **MSRP: $99**

BLACKHAWK! IS TAKING

its award-winning Diversion line of bags and packs to a new level of style and sophistication with the Diversion Wax Canvas series. The new Diversion Wax Canvas Satchel is made with 10.10-ounce Army Duck Martexin Original Wax Canvas and is the perfect size for everyday carry. It holds small and medium-frame handguns and offers easy, discreet access with a pass-through waterproof zipper in the lid. The loop-lined storage compartments accept hook-back/Velcro holsters and accessory panels. The magnetic closure lid is adjustable to increase bag capacity

TOP FEATURES

- Pass-through zipper on lid for discreet access to contents or retrieving small- to medium-frame handguns
- Constructed of 10.10 ounce Army Duck Martexin Original Wax Canvas
- Perfectly sized for carrying everyday items
- Magnetic-closure lid is adjustable to increase bag capacity
- Two loop-lined handgun and accessory storage compartments
- Light-colored nylon-lined interior makes it easier to find and identify contents
- 11.8"high x 10.2"wide x 2.8"deep - 427 cubic inches

TACTICAL EXPERTISE

PHOTO BY ADAM PEREZ



THERE ARE NO GUARANTEES IN A GUNFIGHT. However, while preparing for the day you hope never comes, it's a pretty good guarantee you'll find yourself in a world of trouble if you train with someone whose credentials and experience are sketchy. That's why it's critical to train with one of the best, and that's why we asked Chuck Taylor to handle the duties.

If Hollywood was creating a new superhero, his resume would look Taylor's. In competition and the military, he earned expert ratings. He has trained both covert military and police special-operations teams. Taylor, who operates the American Small Arms Academy, has received commendations from the Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Agency, FBI, U.S. Army Special Forces, U.S. Navy SEALs and more.

In essence, he is a master, and we guarantee in the following pages that you will get expert instruction. **TT**

WHAT'S INSIDE

ENGAGING MULTIPLE TARGETS

TACTICAL RELOADS

ENCOUNTERS OF THE WORST KIND

KEY TIPS & TACTICS TO FOLLOW WHEN ENGAGING MULTIPLE TARGETS

STORY BY CHUCK TAYLOR / PHOTOS BY ADAM PEREZ



"THERE ARE NO GUARANTEES IN A GUNFIGHT, OF COURSE, BUT WHY MAKE A PARTICULARLY NASTY SITUATION WORSE BY UTILIZING LESS EFFECTIVE METHODS?"

THERE'S NO DENYING IT, A MULTIPLE-ADVERSARY SITUATION IS WAY UP ON THE LIST OF THE MOST-DANGEROUS SCENARIOS WE MIGHT FACE IN A GUNFIGHT. YET, LARGELY BECAUSE OF THE ARBITRARY INSERTION OF COMPETITION-ORIENTED CONCEPTS INTO THE TACTICAL SHOOTING REALM (A COMMON PROBLEM THESE DAYS BUT, IN TRUTH, THE TWO ARE AS DIFFERENT AS NIGHT AND DAY), THE TRUE NATURE AND SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEM ARE USUALLY OVERLOOKED — UNTIL NOW.

Multiple Target Defined

First, we need to define multiple target situation. When questioned, most tactical shooters will respond by saying that it's when you face more than one adversary. Really? Not quite.

A true multiple target situation is when all of your adversaries can engage you simultaneously, and it is not predicated solely on their numbers. In addition, the target array itself is part of the equation. A linear array is actually a series of single-target engagements that can be handled by the shooter merely







1) Always take the strong-side target first. Then, swing toward the weak side. It is faster and more controllable without destroying your view.

2) A true multiple target situation nearly always consists of a lateral target array, such as shown here. This is a common gang tactic and is based on the ancient concept of the double envelopment. Conversely, if the target array is linear, then it's actually a series of single-target engagements.

3) Shooter positioning in front of the target array is largely a matter of individual preference. However, in general, being centered or slightly to the strong side of center provides the best balance of right/left traversing capability. A firm firing grip, the release of any manual holster security device and pre-positioning of the support hand will ensure a fast, consistent presentation.



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taking a step or two to the left or right to obfuscate his adversaries' line of fire. Then, he can engage them on a near-to-far basis, moving left and right as necessary.

Thus, a true multiple-target situation nearly always entails the targets being in a lateral array, where they can all engage you at the same time. This is the most common gang tactic and is based upon the ancient and well-proven theory of the double envelopment as originally pioneered by Genghis Khan. When confronted by adversaries in this kind of configuration, they will often begin to spread out and attempt to encircle their

4) The shooter's eyes should remain on the target array throughout the entire weapon presentation process. In order to facilitate the fastest possible presentation, the support hand should be placed horizontally along the body centerline so it can intercept the gun hand more quickly. For safety's sake, the trigger finger should be kept outside the trigger guard until the weapon is clear of the body, under full control and the actual shooting stance is fully established.

5) As the weapon clears the body, any manual weapon safety is disengaged, but since things are happening fast and it's not yet under full control, the trigger finger remains outside the trigger guard.

6) As the gun hand passes the pre-positioned support hand intercepts, and as the firing arm begins to extend outward, the stance itself begins to form. Note that the trigger finger is still outside the trigger guard.

7) The gun is then brought upward by pivoting the arms at the shoulder joints, the trigger finger placed inside the trigger guard, and sight acquisition and alignment begins. As it rises into the lower portion of the shooter's field of view, eye focus should begin to be brought inward from the targets in order to quickly acquire the sights. For maximum weapon control, speed and target visibility, engagement should always begin with the strong-side target and proceed to the weak side.

8) As the front sight centers on the thoracic area of the first target, engage. Remember that all you're trying to do is hit your adversary in the chest, not shoot the center button off his shirt. Bull's-eye-type groups merely indicate a serious imbalance of critical accuracy and speed and, since vital organs are not laid out radially like a bull's-eye and scoring rings, there is no increase in stopping power by so doing. In addition, remember to concentrate on one thing at a time or the problem will overwhelm you.

prey. This makes it necessary for the intended victim to give ground, to "stay out of the bag."

Multiple Target Myth

Another multiple-target myth is that all targets must be hit twice. This too comes from the competition fraternity. Lacking tactical savvy, they fail to see that doing so simply takes too long, thus further aggravating an already hyper-dangerous situation. In fact, the time element in multiple-target situations is highly critical and more crucial than most people realize.

I once asked legendary combat pistolero Bill Jordan for his thoughts on multiple targets and he replied, "That's easy, just get a bullet into everyone and see what happens next." Having been in multiple handgun fights, I couldn't agree more with his analysis. Whether competitive shooters like it or not, or realize it or not, to hit each target only once is a compromise we must make in order to follow intelligent tactical doctrine.

A well-known tactical shooting instructor, whose background is entirely competitive, once challenged this premise and proposed that we shoot his favorite multiple target drill – El Presidente – to validate his oft-stated belief that one can fire two shots on targets as quickly as one. Obviously, he was banking on performing double taps rather than controlled pairs (a necessity in the real world of tactical, criminal and civil liability concerns). However, when we both completed the par-timed exercise, my time was nearly twice as fast as his and all of my shots were center hits.

Order of Engagement

Next, let's consider the order of target engagement. There are three dominant premises.


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KEY NUMBERS

7 IN METERS, THE ORIGINAL DISTANCE AT WHICH MOST THOUGHT AN EDGED OR BLUNT WEAPON WOULD BECOME DEADLY.

1.6 IN SECONDS, THE AMOUNT OF TIME AN AVERAGE MAN CAN COVER 7 METERS.

15 IN METERS, THE REVISED THE DISTANCE AT WHICH MANY POLICE AGENCIES BELIEVE AN EDGED OR BLUNT WEAPONS COULD BECOME DEADLY



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The military premise is based upon distance – engage the nearest target first and work outward. In a military environment, this idea is entirely valid, but in no way involves individuals much less handguns. Instead, it's based upon infantry squad tactics and the use of organic squad weapons. It doesn't include civilians or police officers with handguns in a self-defense scenario and is thus largely inapplicable in those situations because virtually all handgun fights take place at point-blank range.

A second approach is common in law enforcement circles – take the target with the most dangerous weapon first and proceed based upon that premise. While an interesting idea in

9) After the shot is delivered to the thoracic cavity of the first target, keep your optical focus on the front sight and quickly swing to the second target. Do not attempt to shift your focus back and forth between the targets and the front sight in between shots. It will slow you down and increase your error margin.

10) If there are three or more targets, be very careful as you engage the third one. There is a strong tendency to look up from the front sight at the third target, which results in a poor hit or miss. Keep your head down and watch that front sight.

11) By the time you get to the fourth target, your sense of urgency will be amplified, so there is a strong tendency to look up from the target to see what has happened. To do so invites poor shooting, which you cannot afford. Fight it – watch that front sight and get good hits.

12) As soon as all four targets are hit, quickly bring the weapon down to ready and assess the results. Are they all hit? Are they all down? Are they all out of the fight? Do they have friends? Any re-engagement of targets depends upon the answers to these questions.

13) If any of the targets are still capable of projecting deadly force, re-engage, but as a failure to stop and shoot him in the cranio-ocular area of the head. Do not hit him in the chest again. Because his nervous system will largely be shut down by this time, a second shot to the chest is usually ineffective. However, remember that the cranio-ocular is a small target, so watch that front sight and control your trigger. It's always faster to get the hit and end the altercation with one shot than to blow it and be forced to follow up with additional shots.

theory, the fact is that forcing the shooter to make qualitative judgments, particularly when they're based almost entirely upon subjective criteria, while under extreme stress not only takes too long but radically increases error margins as well.

To prove the point, I routinely ask CTASAA students, "If you're facing three adversaries at five meters, one armed with a .38 SPL revolver, a second one with a Heckler & Koch MP5 9mm SMG and the third with a Remington M870 12-gauge shotgun, which is the most dangerous?"

The answers are never consistent and the discussion could go on for hours without definitive resolution. One might say that the .38 SPL handgun at such close quarters is much faster to manipulate than the two shoulder weapons, and he would be right. However, one might also say that the devastating wound of the shotgun leaves little chance of survival, and he would be right. Someone else might choose the SMG. The SMG's 30-round magazine, 750-rpm cyclic rate and small size, make it fast and deadly – even at close range. Therefore, he too would be right.

As a result, they are all wrong. The point here is that not only does the judgment process hinge on subjective opinion, making it suspect in and of itself, but the criteria are so subjective that they simply take too long to efficiently analyze.

The third concept is mine. It embraces the K.I.S.S. principle for which I've become famous, or notorious, depending upon the real-world experience of those discussing the subject. I say that if the adversary is holding a deadly weapon, shoot him; if not, don't. It's that


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HOW TO ENGAGE

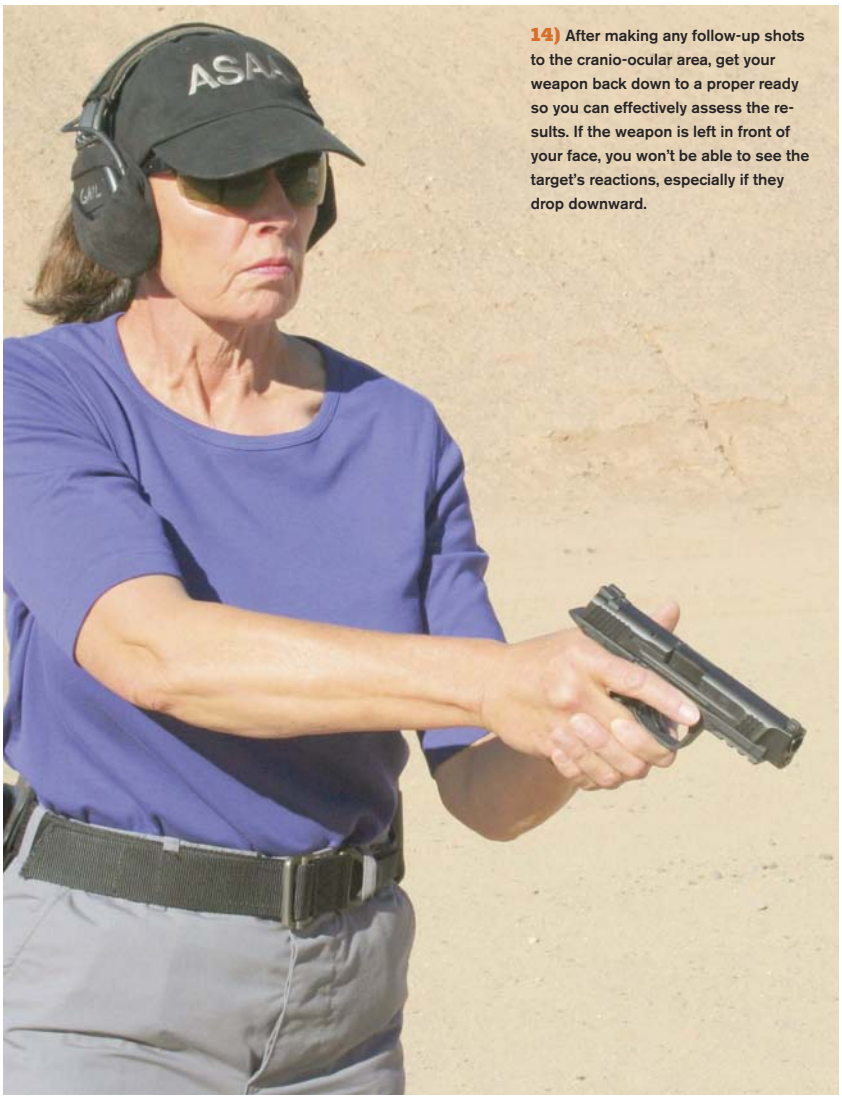
In the accompanying photography, I give a step-by-step method for quickly and effectively engaging multiple targets. Because we write in English, we number from the left. While the targets themselves are numbered left to right 1, 2, 3 and 4, actual engagement by a right-handed shooter is 4, 3, 2 and then 1. Following the last target, the shooter quickly brings his weapon to ready and assesses the situation by asking these four questions:

1 ARE THEY HIT?

2 ARE THEY DOWN?

3 ARE THEY OUT OF THE FIGHT?

4 DO THEY HAVE FRIENDS?



14) After making any follow-up shots to the cranio-ocular area, get your weapon back down to a proper ready so you can effectively assess the results. If the weapon is left in front of your face, you won't be able to see the target's reactions, especially if they drop downward.



15) No matter what, watch the front sight the whole time targets are being engaged. Never look up at the targets or you invite disaster. Make the front sight the center of your universe and it will serve you well.

simple. This means not only is it a faster judgmental process, but it keeps within the laws on deadly force as well. This leaves the shooter to make one more decision – at what distance does an edged or blunt weapon become deadly?

For decades, everyone thought that seven meters, which is not quite 23 feet, was the distance at which the issue became deadly. Yet, when I actually investigated the matter, I discovered the 7-Meter Rule as it came to be called, was based on nothing but theory. It had no statistical basis, nor had it ever actually been tested by anyone.

Right away, I immediately did so. I quickly found that on a dry, level surface, an average man from a standing start, can cover seven meters in an average time of 1.6 seconds. So, let's assume a best-case scenario in which the shooter possesses advanced level weapon handling and shooting skills. If we stand facing our adversary and begin our weapon presentation from the holster as he begins his rush, he will be about halfway to the shooter when our first bullet strikes him in the chest. He will be just off the shooter's muzzle when the second hit is sustained. This shows that even if he begins to collapse at that point, he will almost certainly overrun the shooter from sheer momentum. Unless the shooter manages to "do a matador" and evade the oncoming rush of course.

As a result of this evaluation, many police agencies have upwardly revised their minimum engagement distance when edged or blunt weapons are involved. Most have subsequently arrived



16) Here's what it looks like when multiple targets are properly engaged. From the holster at 5 meters, two targets can be effectively hit in under 1.5 seconds, three targets in 1.8 seconds and four targets in 2 seconds.

at 15 meters as being preferred. Now that we have that issue settled, let's now deal with actual target engagement techniques.

Engagement Techniques

Most competitive shooters go from weak to strong side, but I found via tests that doing so is not only slower and makes the weapon less controllable, it violates a sacred rule of tactical shooting – never lose visual contact with your adversaries if you can help it. Swinging your shooting arm away from your body makes it weaker and the weapon less controllable. The gun, shooting hand and forearm obstruct your view of the other adversaries, thus increasing the likelihood of over-swinging them or slowing down to visually reacquire them as the gun and shooting hand sweep past. From a tactical standpoint, both of these weaknesses make the concept unacceptable. (See the accompanying sidebar on how to engage multiple targets.)

Any target not deemed by the shooter to be fully neutralized is re-engaged, but on a failure-to-stop basis – with a carefully placed cranio-ocular shot. Do not shoot him again in the chest, because considerable time has passed since he was initially hit there and by then his nervous system is almost entirely shut down. Thus, he feels little or nothing, which makes a second shot to the chest far less effective. In contrast, the cranio-ocular shot is definitive and will immediately end the target's aggressive ability.

Remember, the speed of target engagement is determined by the size of the intended target as seen by the shooter. In turn, it also means you must slow down a bit and be more careful with sights and trigger control to ensure a properly placed hit in the cranio-ocular area of the head.

Some instructors – again from the competition sector – advocate always shooting twice at the head, just like they do for the thorax, but I disagree. First, if your first shot strikes its intended point of aim as it should, the head will jerk violently, causing your second shot to miss. Second, even if you miss the head entirely with your first shot, it will still move in reaction causing your second shot to also miss. Instead, shoot a single shot at the cranio-ocular area of the head, then go to ready and assess. Follow up as needed based upon what you see.

Methods to Victory

If you follow the simple concepts I've laid out, you'll be able to quickly and consistently handle any typical multiple target encounter. There is no question that any multiple target situation is exceptionally dangerous, but can be effectively handled if proper concepts and techniques are utilized.

There are no guarantees in a gunfight, of course, but why make a particularly nasty situation worse by utilizing less effective methods? After all, the life you save will almost certainly be your own, and perhaps the lives of others as well. **TT**

DID YOU KNOW?

FOR MAXIMUM WEAPON CONTROL, SPEED AND TARGET VISIBILITY, ENGAGEMENT SHOULD ALWAYS BEGIN WITH THE STRONG SIDE TARGET AND PROCEED TO THE WEAK SIDE.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: As the founder/director of Chuck Taylor's American Small Arms Academy (CTASAA), Chuck Taylor has been involved in the training of tactical and security personnel not only for the Olympics, but of a number of both well-known and covert military and police special-operations teams and the corporate security officers and personal bodyguards of several high-profile corporate and political figures.

3.5 SECONDS

USING THESE PROVEN METHODS, PERFECT THE TACTICAL RELOAD SO YOU ARE OBSCENELY FAST & SUPER EFFICIENT

STORY BY CHUCK TAYLOR / PHOTOS BY ADAM PEREZ



THE CHATTER HAS BEEN ABUNDANT. IN BOTH PRINT AND CONVERSATION, WRITERS AND TRAINERS ARE DISCUSSING THE VALIDITY OF THE TACTICAL RELOAD, AND IF IT IS INDEED A VALID CONCEPT, WHICH METHOD IS BEST. I CAN CERTAINLY SHED SOME LIGHT ON THIS.

The History

As the inventor of the tactical reload, I can say their arguments follow an all too familiar pattern… most show a lack of tactical savvy, real-world experience and proper background. Thus, it's easy to understand why they usually miss the point of what it's all about, and which procedure is the most efficient. It's also clear that many current writers and trainers fail to understand not only the "how" of the tactical reload, but the "why" and "when" as well.

Viewed from a tactical standpoint, the speed reload that many claim to be

> **"… IN A GUNFIGHT, THE ULTIMATE REWARD ISN'T A TROPHY, IT'S SURVIVAL… THE RIGHT TO KEEP BREATHING."**
>
> **— CHUCK TAYLOR**

WEAVER

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preferable is actually intended for a completely different set of circumstances. Specifically, it was invented by an old friend of mine, the late Ray Chapman, for use in IPSC competition with the M1911. It never had any tactical basis, nor has it ever won a gunfight; only marksmanship can do that.

In the real world of an actual handgun fight, there can be only two reasons for speed reloading, which are as follows:

1) In spite of your best efforts, the situation has continued to escalate beyond control.

2) You've been missing too much.

While it's theoretically possible that reason #1 could occur, statistically it has about the same potential as being struck by lightning on a clear day or winning the lottery, making #2 (missing too much) the overwhelming reason people perform it. This being the case, disproportionately emphasizing it is a waste of time better spent on what's important – hitting targets quickly and accurately.

Given the preponderance of large-capacity pistols these days, there can be little legitimate reason to speed load. After all, if you don't solve the problem with the first 17 shots, what makes you think it will get any better with the next 17? The fact is, in a typical tactical situation it won't, because the more you shoot, the more poorly you shoot. Given this fact of tactical life, the odds are overwhelming that you won't survive long enough to successfully complete it.

The History of Why

I created the tactical reload to fill a void: how to bring your weapon back to full ammunition capacity after the initial confrontation concludes. Under such circumstances, there are no targets and

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thus no emergency as would be the case if a speed reload situation were present. However, in a tactical reload scenario, there is a lull in the action; all initially engaged targets are down and neutralized. But, handgun fights being what they are – reactive, close-range encounters – additional targets might well appear at any moment. So bringing the gun back to its full ammunition capacity is a smart move and the reason I created the tactical reload in the first place.

Under such circumstances, the speed reload makes no sense. Why would anyone want to unnecessarily abandon a magazine that still contains ammunition that might be sorely needed in the next few seconds, then bend down, locate the dropped magazine and retrieve it? Doing so is tactically dangerous because it takes your eyes from the area of conflict and takes longer than a properly executed tactical reload.

The tactical reload, often taught these days incorrectly, involves having two magazines in the non-firing hand simultaneously, while attempting to control the partially spent mag and inserting a fresh one into the gun. During the tactical reload's developmental stage back in 1982, the first protocol I formulated utilized this concept and was quickly discarded upon discovering that it had a 40% error rate. As a result, it was never taught by me, nor espoused to anyone.

It's also worth noting that in a real gunfight, two metabolic conditions are guaranteed to appear. First, your hands will be instantly soaking wet. Second, due to the massive adrenalin surge that accompanies all deadly encounters, they will also be shaking.

ISOSCELES

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If you add these issues to the equation, you can easily see why trying to simultaneously manipulate both magazines in the same hand is undesirable, as the danger of dropping one or both of them, or inadvertently reinserting the partially-spent magazine back into the gun, is quite real. If you don't believe me, try to perform the protocol five times without mishap after coating your hands with motor oil and running 100 yards and back. That will illustrate the problem nicely. The correct tactical reload procedure has none of these flaws and can be performed without ever looking at the gun at all.

Moreover, the method they espouse positions the pistol in front of the shooter's face, thus blocking much of his view of the area of conflict, which is always a bad idea. Regardless of whether the operator utilizes the "in-out" isosceles or "up-down" Weaver stance, the tactical reload is performed with the gun at the ready position, not in front of the face like a speed load.

The isosceles "in-out" ready position places the gun in both hands in front of the chest just below shoulder level, whereas the "up-down" Weaver ready has the gun held diagonally down in both hands with arms extended at about 40-degrees below the shooter's line of sight. In both cases, the weapon is kept well below the shooter's line of sight to maintain visual contact with the target area, never in front of his or her face. The specifics are in an accompanying sidebar.

Proven Results

With only a few repetitions, the protocol is easily executed without ever look-

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ing at the gun. With reasonable practice, it can be completed in as little as 3.5 seconds. Abandoning the partially-spent magazine while performing the speed reload, then locating it on the ground and recovering it takes much longer.

One last point, the current trend toward "movement" also bears discussion here. Movement is fine as long as it doesn't slow or otherwise impede reactive efficiency. Pistol fights are, after all, conducted in fast timeframes. However, as with other instances of "tactical trendiness" we've seen over the years, it's being taken out of context and overdone.

On repeated occasions lately, I've seen the obsession for movement override tactical judgment – all accounts were from recorded facts on handgun encounters – and good common sense.
In so doing, it usually causes weapon-handling procedures that typically take only a few seconds to suddenly take four or five times longer to complete. That's bad tactics, guys, and an unnecessary and extremely dangerous thing to do.

In the case of the tactical reload, let's not forget that it's performed during the first lull in action after the initial encounter concludes. This means there are no targets – they're all down and neutralized. So why would we want to increase the time it takes to perform a tactical reload by initiating movement when it isn't necessary in the first place?

As an example of this phenomenon, I recently saw a student so obsessed with movement that while performing a tactical reload, he literally danced all over the range, increasing the time it took him to complete it by 500%. Instead of 3.5 or 4 seconds, it took him a full 25 seconds. It

doesn't take a tactical genius to figure out what would have happened if additional targets had appeared during that time.

When, Why, How

This, then, is the why, when and how of the correct tactical reload – the one I've taught to several hundred-thousand students over the years. It's been battlefield-tested and works quite well, far better than the mutations created on and for use on shooting ranges that ignore the wet, shaking hands that accompany every gunfight.

No one gets in gun battles on shooting ranges or during an IPSC/USPSA match and for tactical environments, the techniques they engender are less than state-of-the-art. Tactical shooting is an art and science all its own, and entails circumstances not encountered on a shooting range or in an IPSC/USPSA match. Thus the mindset and resulting methodologies are night-and-day different and have little validity when the bullets fly both directions and life itself hangs in the balance.

In conclusion, do not misunderstand the message. I have no axe to grind here. This is, after all, a free country and however ill advised I find some of them to be, everyone has a right to their opinions. However, tactical shooting is a serious matter, demanding a responsible, professional, real-world approach to create the most effective techniques possible. I didn't create the tactical reload arbitrarily, or arrive at the procedure it entails by coincidence. It was the result of months of serious study, many theoretical discussions with credible tactical shooters and thorough evaluation under realistic circumstances.

Last, but by no means least, it was also the result of serious field-testing, wherein it clearly showed its superiority over other methods. There are far too many deficient tactical reloads being taught these days, so let me set the record straight. Remember, in a gunfight, the ultimate reward isn't a trophy, it's survival … it's the right to keep breathing. Thus, the techniques involved must reflect this philosophy. If they do not, the price of failure is far too high. **TT**

STEP BY STEP THE TACTICAL RELOAD

It's execution from both the isosceles and Weaver ready positions follow:

1 The firer removes his non-firing hand from the gun, moves to his spare magazine and grasps it, with the index finger placed along the front edge of the magazine.

2 The magazine is withdrawn from its carrier and brought rapidly to the vicinity of the gun's magazine well.

3 The index finger is curled back from the front of the magazine to allow it and the non-firing thumb to articulate.

4 The magazine release button is pressed and, with the thumb and forefinger of the non-firing hand, the partially-spent magazine is removed from the gun.

5 The magazine is then placed high between the ring and little finger of the firing hand to avoid obstructing the mouth of the magazine well.

6 The forefinger of the non-firing hand is then replaced on the front of the full magazine, which is then "rolled" into the well from rear to front and firmly seated with the base of the non-firing palm.

7 The partially-spent magazine is grasped by the non-firing hand and moved to whatever retention location the firer desires. A pants pocket is usually the best place. Do not attempt to insert it into your spare magazine carrier. With wet, shaking hands, the potential for dropping it is too great.

8 The non-firing hand is then returned to the gun. Note that during the entire procedure the gun is kept at the ready position, and is never, ever, brought up in front of the face.

FOR MORE INFO

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Chuck Taylor has been involved in the training of tactical and security personnel not only for the Olympics but for a number of both well-known and covert military and police special-operations teams.

PROVEN RELIABILITY

HANDGUNS, SHOTGUNS AND AR-15'S THAT DELIVER ALL-AROUND PERFORMANCE

BY BOB CAMPBELL



WHEN IT COMES TO CHOOSING A TACTICAL FIREARM FOR HOME DEFENSE, AREA DEFENSE, DUTY USE OR 3-GUN COMPETITION, YOU'LL NEED TO BE WELL INFORMED TO MAKE A GOOD CHOICE. YOUR GOAL IS TO OWN A RELIABLE, APPROPRIATE AND AFFORDABLE FIREARM. YOU WANT THE MOST GUN FOR THE MONEY YOU CAN SPEND.

There is considerable argument in favor of choosing the single type of firearm that best fits your lifestyle so you can spend the lion's share on that firearm. For example, if you are a concealed carry permit holder and spend most of the day traveling, the handgun is your most important firearm. If you're primarily concerned with home defense, then a shotgun may be most appropriate. If your ranch covers a few acres and predators with both two and four legs are a concern, a good AR-15 rifle makes a lot of sense.

When you choose a service grade handgun, how you use it should help you decide the type to choose. If the handgun is primarily a backup to the long gun, a 9mm handgun with a simple manual of arms may be the best choice. If your handgun is the primary weapon, a single-action 1911 .45 that you have proofed and mastered might be the better choice. The AR-15 .223 rifle has much to recommend. However, if you are a peace officer who may encounter felons at long range and behind cover, the .308 looks good. The pump-action shotgun is a weapon system with many sound recommendations, as well.

When choosing a firearm, reliability is the primary concern. Some firearms are well proven with documented use for decades. Others with obvious advantages and attractive features are less proven and must earn our respect. The following buyer's guide covers a representative sample of the best firearms available today. **TT**

FABRIQUE HERSTAL / MODEL: FN9S 9MM / WEBSITE: FNHUSA.COM / MSRP: $649.99

OVER 30 YEARS AGO, the West German police trials introduced a new tactical doctrine. The handgun should have safety features; for simplicity's sake, however, it should not have a manual safety. The FN9S 9mm is a double-action only, striker-fired, polymer-frame handgun that embodies this simplicity of operation.



THE SPECS

CALIBER: 9mm Luger
OVERALL LENGTH: 7.24 inches
WEAPON HEIGHT: 5.46 inches
WEIGHT EMPTY: 25 ounces
BARREL LENGTH: 4.0 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 17 rounds

HECKLER & KOCH / MODEL: VP9 9MM / WEBSITE: HK-USA.COM / MSRP: $629.95



THE SPECS

CALIBER: 9mm Luger
OVERALL LENGTH: 7.34 inches
WEAPON HEIGHT: 5.4 inches
WEIGHT EMPTY: 22.3 ounces
BARREL LENGTH: 4.09 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 15 rounds

THE NEW HK VP9 HAS PROVEN POPULAR AND with good reason. The pistol is light on the hip at only 33 ounces fully loaded with 124-grain Speer Gold Dot ammunition. The striker-fired design builds upon the proven P30 pistol but with the advantage of a more compact operating mechanism and a lighter, more controllable trigger action. This is a credible all-around tactical handgun.

BERETTA / MODEL: 92A1 9MM / WEBSITE: BERETTA.COM/EN-US / MSRP: $667.44

WHAT CAN YOU SAY ABOUT A handgun that has accompanied our troops to every battle and hotspot in the world for more than 30 years? The Beretta 92A1 is the proven Model 92 with an accessory light rail molded into the frame. This is a soft-shooting 9mm handgun even with NATO specification ammunition. If you prefer an absolutely drop safe combination safety and decock lever, the Beretta has it. This is from our oldest gunmaker in continuous service to the world's armies, and its product is a great battle pistol.



THE SPECS

CALIBER: 9mm Luger
OVERALL LENGTH: 8.5 inches
WEAPON HEIGHT: 5.4 inches
WEIGHT EMPTY: 34 ounces
BARREL LENGTH: 4.9 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 15 rounds

COLT / MODEL: COMBAT ELITE / WEBSITE: COLT.COM / MSRP: $1,053.10

THE U.S. ARMY ADOPTED THE COLT 1911 Government Model in 1911. The modern Colt 1911 Combat Elite is a far improved version with modern material and CNC machine fitting. Just the same, a cavalryman familiar with the 1911 could handle the new handgun well.

The Colt Combat Elite chambers the proven .45 ACP cartridge. The pistol features forward cocking serrations, Novak Lo Mount sights, custom grade beavertail grip safety and Colt quality.



THE SPECS

CALIBER: .45 ACP
OVERALL LENGTH: 8.25 inches
WEAPON HEIGHT: 5.25 inches
WEIGHT EMPTY: 38 ounces
BARREL LENGTH: 5 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 8 rounds

BERETTA / MODEL: 92A1 COMPACT 9MM / WEBSITE: BERETTA.COM/EN-US / MSRP: $591.76

THE BERETTA COMPACT IS A little-known version of the Beretta 92. The Beretta 92A1 compact is a pistol that has proven popular with soldiers returning home. The operating features are the same as the full size M9. Many feel the heft and balance of this handgun are superior to the full-size service pistol. The example illustrated is the desirable stainless Inox version.



THE SPECS

CALIBER: 9mm Luger
OVERALL LENGTH: 7.5 inches
WEAPON HEIGHT: 5.25 inches
WEIGHT EMPTY: 31.6 ounces
BARREL LENGTH: 4.25 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 13 rounds

RUGER / MODEL: SR 556 .223 / WEBSITE: RUGER.COM / MSRP: $1,995



RUGER HAS LEAPT INTO THE AR-15 MARKET IN A BIG WAY. The SR 556 may be the first production grade piston-driven AR-15. The piston system has advantages and while they may be debated, the market exists and Ruger supplies a good rifle. The SR 556 is Ruger reliable. The rifle will accept any of a host of AR-15 magazines.

THE SPECS **CALIBER:** .223 Remington/5.56mm NATO | **OVERALL LENGTH:** 32.75-36 inches | **WEAPON HEIGHT:** 7.75 inches **WEIGHT EMPTY:** 7.9 pounds | **BARREL LENGTH:** 16.1 inches | **MAGAZINE CAPACITY:** 20/30 rounds

BERETTA / MODEL: ARX-100 / WEBSITE: BERETTA.COM/EN-US / MSRP: $1,950



THE RIFLE'S SPECIFICATIONS SEEM ordinary enough, but the details are very interesting … even innovative. The rifle accepts AR-15 magazines, the stock is a side folder and the rifle is fully ambidextrous. It does not simply cater to left-handed shooters; every control and even ejection is tailored for fully ambidextrous use. No matter which is the forward hand, the rifle may be fired around corners from any tactical position with either hand.

THE SPECS **CALIBER:** .223 Remington/5.56mm NATO | **OVERALL LENGTH:** 32.75-36 inches | **WEAPON HEIGHT:** 7.75 inches | **WEIGHT EMPTY:** 7.9 pounds **BARREL LENGTH:** 16.1 inches | **MAGAZINE CAPACITY:** 20/30 rounds

RUGER / MODEL: SR 762 / WEBSITE: RUGER.COM / MSRP: $2,195



SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO HAVE A .308. THE RUGER SR-762 has many of the same features of the SR-556. The SR-762 is heavier, however, and beefed up in all particulars to offer a reliable and accurate AR-type rifle for hunting medium to large game. The Ruger is ideal for those who wish to own a rifle that may be counted on not just in most situations but in worst-case scenarios.

THE SPECS **CALIBER:** .308 Winchester/7.62 NATO | **OVERALL LENGTH:** 34.75-38 inches | **WEAPON HEIGHT:** 8.0 inches **WEIGHT EMPTY:** 8.6 pounds | **BARREL LENGTH:** 16.12 inches | **MAGAZINE CAPACITY:** 20 rounds

COLT / MODEL: M4A1 CARBINE / WEBSITE: COLT.COM / MSRP: $1,546



THIS IS AS CLOSE TO THE MILITARY M4 CARBINE AS WE are able to purchase. The Colt features a monolithic receiver and handguard, and the safety is ambidextrous. The sights are designed to give an advantage in combat while the modern rail allows mounting optics. The rifle's stock may be adjusted to fit any shooter. The monolithic receiver and rail are good design features. This is a pulse-pounding exciting rifle and one that will deliver excellent all-around performance.

THE SPECS **CALIBER:** .223 Remington/5.56mm NATO | **OVERALL LENGTH:** 29.8-33 inches
WEAPON HEIGHT: 7.8 inches | **WEIGHT EMPTY:** 6.11 pounds | **BARREL LENGTH:** 16 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 20/30 rounds

SIG SAUER / MODEL: SIG516 / WEBSITE: SIGSAUER.COM / MSRP: $1,399



ROCK RIVER ARMS / MODEL: LAR-6.8 X SERIES / WEBSITE: ROCKRIVERARMS.COM / MSRP: $1,600



WE WOULD BE REMISS NOT TO INCLUDE AT LEAST ONE RIFLE chambered for the modern, effective and powerful 6.8 cartridge. Rock River Arms has earned an excellent reputation for credible performance, accuracy and durability in the field and this RRA rifle comes with a one MOA accuracy guarantee. All in all, this is a credible choice with plenty of power.

THE SPECS **CALIBER:** 6.8 Remington | **OVERALL LENGTH:** 27.1-36 inches | **WEAPON HEIGHT:** 7.8 inches
WEIGHT EMPTY: 7.9 pounds | **BARREL LENGTH:** 18-inch fluted stainless | **MAGAZINE CAPACITY:** 20/30 rounds

REMINGTON / MODEL: 870 TACTICAL SHOTGUN / WEBSITE: REMINGTON.COM / MSRP: $499-699



THE REMINGTON 870 SHOTGUN IS THE TACTICAL SHOTGUN THAT HAS GAINED FAVOR with both civilian and institutional users for more than 50 years. The Remington features dual-action rails; it is maneuverable; it hits hard and is capable of solving many problems. It is carried as a shark killer on boats and used to launch munitions in urban warfare and to breach doors worldwide; the Remington is a versatile shotgun.

THE SPECS **CALIBER:** 12 Gauge 2¾ and 3-inch | **OVERALL LENGTH:** 38.5 inches | **WEAPON HEIGHT:** 4 inches
WEIGHT EMPTY: 7.5 pounds | **BARREL LENGTH:** 18.5 inches | **MAGAZINE CAPACITY:** 7 rounds



SIG quality and reliability are legendary. This maker is among a few proven in both European and North American military and police testing, and the 516 is an example of that. With a 16-inch barrel and weighing in at 7.3 pounds, this is an AR-15 with attention to detail. The gas-piston system is preferred by many and arguably SIG got it right with the 516. This rifle will accept any AR-15 magazine.

THE SPECS **CALIBER:** .223 Remington/ 5.56mm NATO | **OVERALL LENGTH:** 27.1-35.875 inches
WEAPON HEIGHT: 7.75 inches | **WEIGHT EMPTY:** 8.2 pounds | **BARREL LENGTH:** 16 inches
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 20\30 rounds

3 IN 1

FEATURING 3 ESSENTIAL TOOLS, CRIMSON TRACE'S MODULAR VERTICAL FOREGRIP IS AN IDEAL SOLUTION FOR YOUR TACTICAL NEEDS

BY JOHN N. RAGUSO



CRIMSON TRACE CORP. (CTC) WAS FOUNDED OVER 20 YEARS AGO IN THE SHADOW OF TOWERING NEARBY MT. HOOD NATIONAL PARK. TODAY, IT BOASTS OVER 100 DEDICATED EMPLOYEES MANUFACTURING THE LATEST STATE-OF-THE-ART LASER SIGHTING GEAR IN WILSONVILLE, OR.

Crimson Trace designed and manufactured over 150 product lines during this time and has shipped over 2 million sets of Lasergrips and Laserguard units to responsible gun owners throughout the world.

CTC's diverse customer base includes the U.S. Military; federal, state and local law enforcement agencies; private security personnel; concealed carry aficionados; defense-minded citizens; target shooters and sportsmen. Its corporate motto is simple and singular, "To enhance people's ability to protect family, home and country."



■ The red laser goes for $479 while the green costs $649.

Sweet! Moreover, according to head honcho Ian Harrison, every one of CTC's employees are a member of the NRA. That's putting both your money and your politics squarely behind your product line.

ONE FOR THREE

One of my favorite Crimson Trace products is its popular MVF-515. The MVF acronym stands for "modular vertical foregrip." The simple science of this design combines three of the most essential tactical tools: a vertical foregrip for enhanced weapon control, a tactical light to acquire and identify your target and a laser-targeting device for accurate aiming under any ambient lighting condition.

The MVF works equally well whether shooting a shotgun, modern sporting rifle or pistol-caliber carbine, by combining all of these features into one ergonomically designed and feature-rich combo unit.

The beauty of the Crimson Trace MVF design is that it takes up a fraction of the requisite space on your weapon's rail system compared to the three aforementioned individual components. The MVF-515 solves the problem of geography on your go-to defensive tools by taking up less overall Picatinny rail space, plus it also allows the operator to enjoy all

three capabilities when Picatinny rails might be limited – you only need one four-inch P-rail at the 180-degree position and you are in business. The MVF-515 also affords the operator the ability to manipulate a diverse mix of light and laser functions from one central set of easy-to-use controls.

The MVF-515 is typically lighter in weight than the trio of disparate accessory elements. It makes your weapon more balanced by keeping the grip's weight slightly forward and below the centerline. Additionally, there are no wires or separate pressure switches to mount, get in the way or snag on something in the dark.

An added bonus of this intelligent design, is the set of redundant waterproof activation switches placed on either side of the vertical grip. Both righties and lefties will find the MVF easy to use with a very short learning curve. The MVF-515's vertical foregrip measures approximately 5.5-inches in overall length and the clamshell-style removable nylon grip panels are textured with a stippled surface on the front and back that will grab and stick to either a gloved or bare hand when it's time for action stations.

SPECIFICATIONS

DIMENSIONS: 5.35" H x 2.75" W x 3.0" D

WEIGHT: 10.2 ounces

MATERIALS & FINISH: Tang (6061-T6 hard anodized aircraft aluminum); Covers (polymer grip pads and rubber overmolded activation pads)

COLOR: Black

ACTIVATION METHOD: Overmolded activation pads

ACTIVATION LOCATION: Dual side activation

ATTACHMENT: Twin recoil lugs on 1913-style accessory rail

INSTALLATION: User Installed

BATTERY TYPE & NUMBER: CR123 Lithium (2)

LIGHT BATTERY LIFE: 4+ hours

LASER BATTERY LIFE: 48+ hours

ACTIVATION MODE: Independent momentary, strobe and constant

SIGHTING: Laser factory sighted at 50'; user adjustable for windage and elevation. Light is fixed.

DOT SIZE: Approx. 0.5" at 50'

LIGHT SPECS: 150/200 Lumen LED

LASER (RED) SPECS: Class 3R visible laser diode; 5mW peak; wavelength 633nm

WARRANTY: Three Year Full Warranty

MSRP: $479 (RED LASER); $649 (GREEN LASER)

> **"THE MVF WORKS EQUALLY WELL WHETHER SHOOTING A SHOTGUN, MODERN SPORTING RIFLE OR PISTOL CALIBER CARBINE..."**



■ Operating the MVF-515 is simple, and it features an ambidextrous grip.

TOUGH ENOUGH

Crimson Trace's MVF-515 offers each operator a trio of useful modes: pulse/temporary on, momentary strobe and constant on, for both the 150/200 lumens tactical light and the laser, which produces an approximate ½-inch dot 50-feet downrange and is available in red or green.

My MVF-515 product sample was equipped with a red laser. I strapped it on to a variety of test weapons, including a Rock River LAR-9 pistol caliber carbine, Kel-Tec RFB 7.62x51 NATO bullpup battle rifle, Rock River LAR-15 ATH middy carbine, Rock River 7.62x51 NATO LAR-8 and KRISS Vector 45-ACP carbine. Just to be thorough, I also tested it on a variety of MIL-SPEC Mossberg 590A1 12-gauge pump-action shotguns equipped with tri-rail forearms. The MVF-515 attached easily with a standard slot screwdriver to every weapon's lower Picatinny rail and seemed right at home with variety of different levels of recoil.

Operating the MVF-515 is simple enough, but it's advisable to read the instructions to tweak maximum user capability from this multi-function accessory. This truly ambidextrous grip features (top-to-bottom) a master on/off switch of the light/laser, light activation button and laser activation button.

To set a desired mode for the light or laser, the user first holds down the master on/off switch for the function to be set and then releases the switch when the desired mode is reached. The light or laser, depending on which function you are setting, will cycle through momentary on, momentary strobe and constant illumination. Depending on your preferences, the light and laser can be programmed independently of any of the three modes by using the master on/off switches.

Disassembly of the MVF-515 is accomplished by depressing the release button under the butt cap and sliding the cap forward and completely off the grip. The grip halves can then be separated and removed from the aluminum grip tang. The laser grip (port side section) can be swapped for a green one or replaced at that point. The light, set into the starboard grip panel, can also be easily removed. The dual CR123 lithium batteries may be replaced once the grip halves are apart. To reassemble, everything snaps back into place in the reverse order of how it was disassembled.

■ The MVF works on a shotgun, a modern sporting rifle or pistol-caliber carbine.



Unlike other components competing for tactical space on your weapon's 1913-style lower Picatinny rail that attach via a single lug or Allen screw, the Crimson Trace MVF-515 modular vertical foregrip offers an extremely robust attachment tang that is manufactured from 6061-T6 hard anodized aircraft aluminum. As long as your weapon has a minimum four-inch long lower Picatinny rail, the MVF-515 will securely mate to it. The MVF does this by employing a pair of burly recoil lugs that nest into the rail's slots approximately 2.3-inches apart and bolt firmly to the rail with twin mounting clamps and 5/16 hex-head nuts that are slotted to allow tightening with a coin or screwdriver. This is as strong a connection as I have used on any accessory grip tested to date. Once you have zeroed the grip's built-in laser designator, it should stay zeroed.

THE EXTRA MILE

As an incentive, Crimson Trace offers its thanks after the sale by giving you free batteries. This unique program allows one (1) set of batteries per calendar year per product and is valid for most Crimson Trace products and battery types.

According to CTC, all of its laser sights are weatherproof so there's no risk taking them in the heavy rain or other severe environments. Submerging them in water, while not recommended, will not destroy the laser sight. If they are accidentally immersed, simply remove the batteries and allow the sight to air dry. **TT**

FOR MORE INFO

CRIMSON TRACE
CrimsonTrace.com
800.442.2406

MASTER OF 1

PRACTICE THESE DRILLS TO PERFECT THE USE OF ONE-HANDED SHOOTING & STRENGTHEN YOUR WEAK HAND

STORY AND PHOTOS BY RICHARD CRAYS

GUNFIGHTS HAPPEN SUDDENLY. YOU DON'T GET A 2-MINUTE WARNING TO GET READY, AND THERE ARE NO TIME-OUTS TO FIX YOUR GEAR. YOU WILL LIKELY BE IN THE FOOD COURT WITH THE KIDS OR SITTING IN A THEATER WITH POPCORN IN ONE HAND AND A SODA IN THE OTHER WHEN YOU HEAR THE SHOT THAT STARTS THE FIGHT. BECAUSE RESEARCH SHOWS MOST CANNOT GET BOTH HANDS ON THEIR HANDGUN DURING A GUNFIGHT, IT'S CRITICAL TO MASTER ONE-HAND SHOOTING.

Overwhelming Evidence

Over the last 34 years, I have had the opportunity to talk to more than 200 people who have been involved in gunfights. I have also watched more than 300 videos of gunfights. In all of those encounters, I only found seven in which the shooter used both hands, and a perfect stance for the engagement. Most were pushing someone out of the way, holding a flashlight in one hand or just didn't have time to get the other hand up there.

In the course of the last 10 years, FBI statistics, studies done by the Force Science Institute and several training entities have found that law enforcement gunfights go about four seconds with an average of five shots fired. Depending on the year you read those studies, the distance or type of weapon used in the assault will change the details slightly. Very little documented research looks at the number of hands on the gun at the time of the fight, and there is not a lot of research numbers to quote out there for your average Joe's fight, but there is plenty of video online to prove my point.

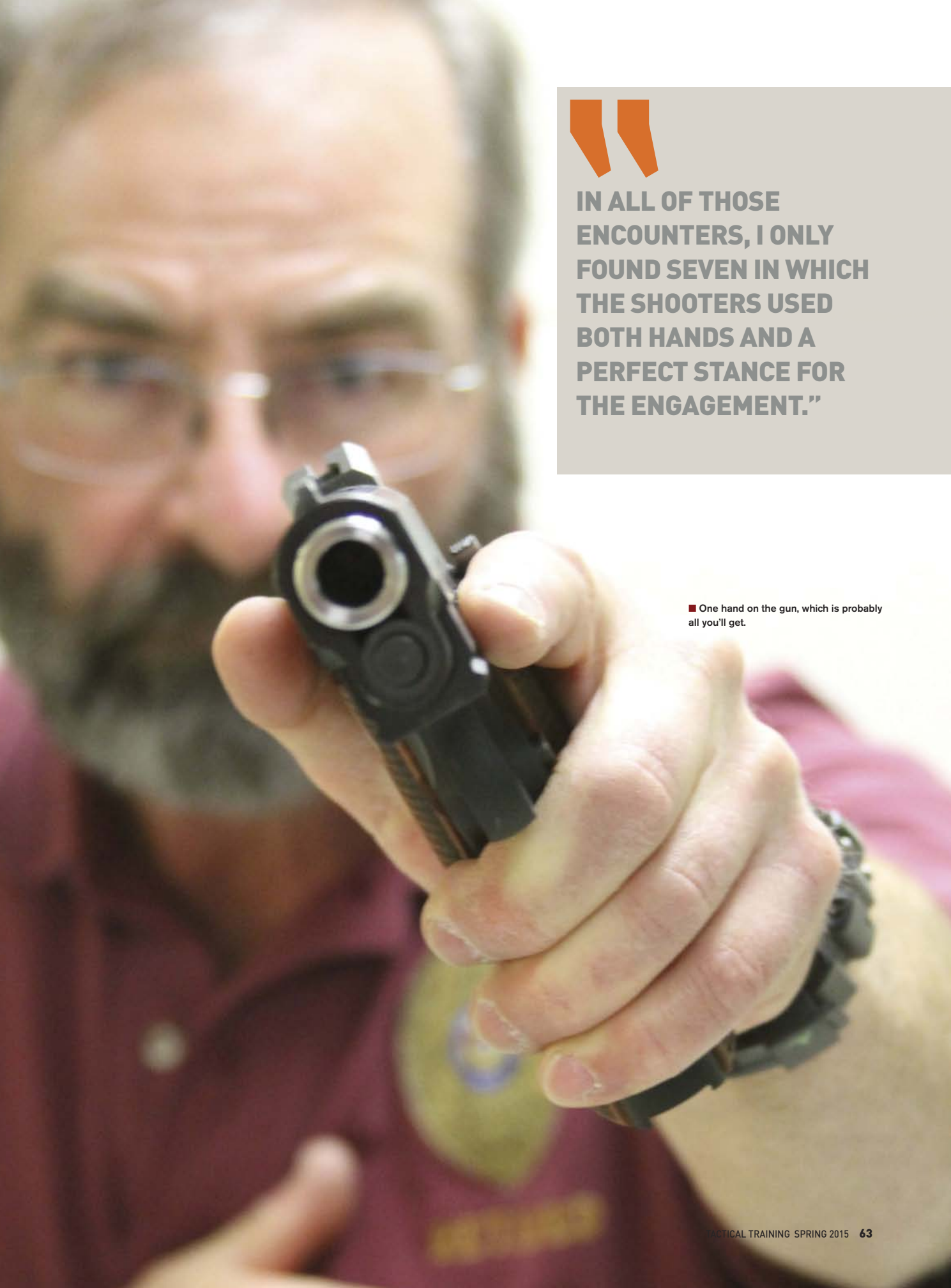
Stop & Think

Think about this one-handed thing the next time you are at the range. If you were walking through the mall doing some shopping with your spouse and some nut started shooting up the food court patrons, could you push your spouse to cover behind the pillar as you draw your pistol and shoot the villain? Could you pull the car door shut as you shoot the carjacker who is pointing his Hi-Point at you? Could you hold your child's hand to keep him from getting trampled in the stampede as the orange-haired murderer starts shooting in that theater?

Now that we are on the same page, let's talk about the dynamics and then go over some drills to get you up to speed on what that gunfight will most probably be if and when it comes.

One-Hand Fundamentals

Shooting with one hand is exactly like punching someone in the chest. With practice, we can get



IN ALL OF THOSE ENCOUNTERS, I ONLY FOUND SEVEN IN WHICH THE SHOOTERS USED BOTH HANDS AND A PERFECT STANCE FOR THE ENGAGEMENT."

■ One hand on the gun, which is probably all you'll get.



■ Research indicates most cannot get both hands on their handgun during a gunfight; therefore, be prepared to use just one hand and train accordingly.



■ The author spoke to more than 200 people and watched more than 300 videos of gunfights. How many used both hands and a perfect stance? Seven.

pretty good at it. With shooting, like punching, technique is critical. As you drive your hand forward from the center of your chest, you should be rotating it slightly with your thumb raised and palm turning down. Your eyes should never leave the target area until the sights of the gun block your view of the threat area. When they do, you'll change your focus from threat to a sight picture.

What, thumb up? Yes. By raising your thumb, you stabilize the grip and reduce the tendency to push the round down and to the outside of your threat. We need to ensure we have a

DIY

HOW TO BUILD A SWINGER TRAINING AID

Building a swinger is simple and quick. All you need is a milk jug, six feet of clothesline or 550 cord and a medium-sized teddy bear. Filling the jug with water will make it about 8 pounds.

Tie the cord to the waist of the teddy bear and the handle of the jug. Hold the hand of the teddy bear and get the jug swinging. The jug won't bruise your leg if it hits it like a dumbbell would, and you can change the weight by pouring out some of the water.

photo demonstrating this.

About 15 years ago, I had the chance to spend a day with an Olympic shooting coach. I had seen most of those athletes raising their thumb when shooting the slow fire courses, so I asked him about the technique.

"Because of the location of these ligaments on the either side of the metacarpal head and joint, the tendons are pulled tight in flex but relaxed in extension," he said. "Conversely, the collateral ligaments are relaxed in flex but tight in extension." (Mike, if you are reading this, thanks for that tip and all the other things I stole from you.)

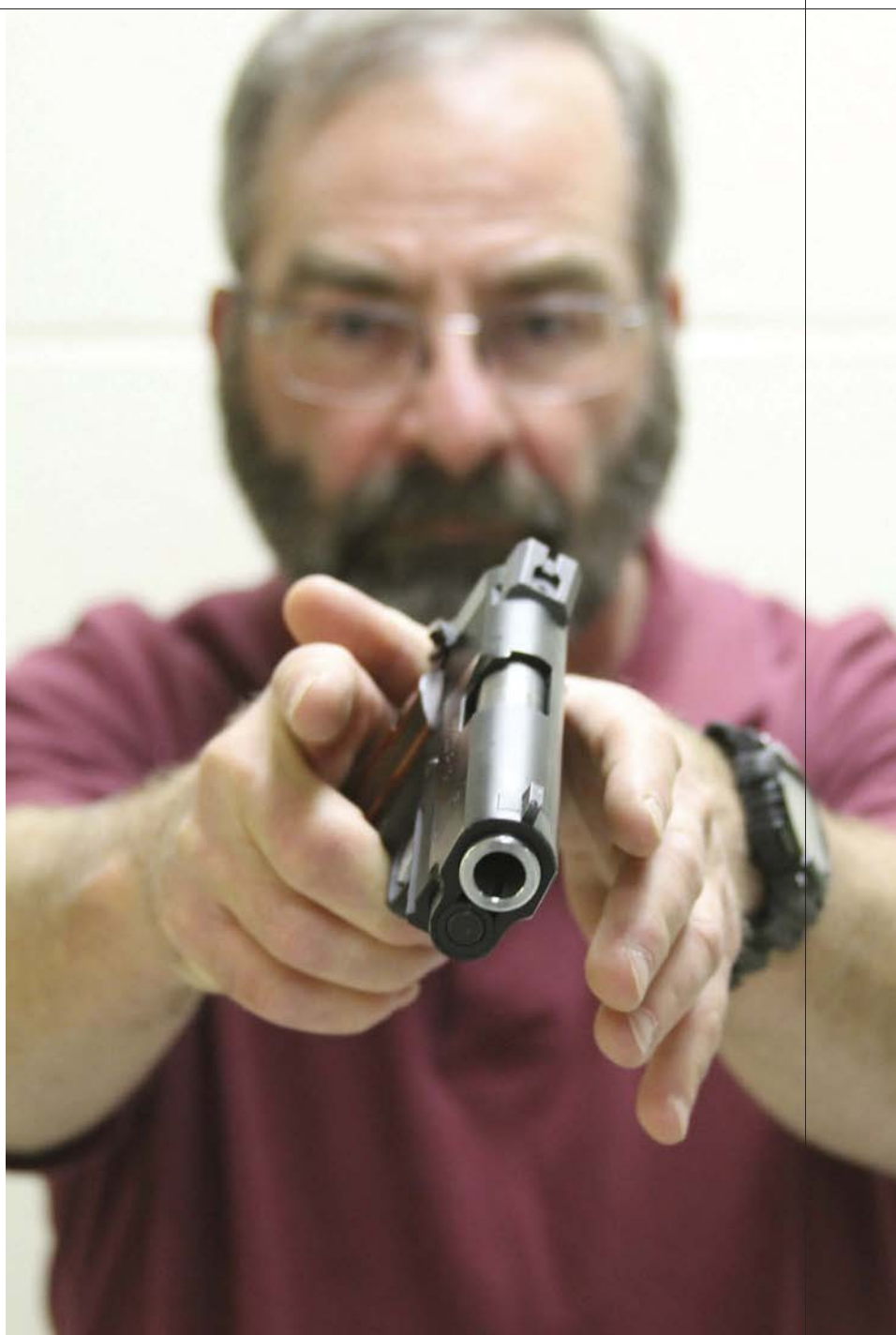
To see for yourself, try this with an empty pistol. Raise the thumb up and watch those collateral ligaments tighten. You'll see two ridges pop up at the base of your thumb where it connects to the wrist. This support will manage the recoil and keep the shots going where they belong.

Next, keep your body squared up to the threat. This puts more weight behind the gun, keeps you from turning your head (and limiting your vision of the battlefield) and is quicker than repositioning your feet for that target-shooter's bladed stance. Bend your knees slightly to put your knees over your toes and lean forward with your chest. All this will better manage the recoil with only one hand.

What to do with the other hand? In training, you need to start with that hand pulled into your chest. This keeps it from swinging around and disturbing your balance during the initial learning stage. After you have mastered the strong one-hand presentation, and practiced it dry, add a SIRT or Airsoft pistol to the drill before going to the range for live fire.

The Next Level of Drills

After you have mastered the live fire drills,



■ Focus on your strong hand master grip. Detail the intricacies and learn to mimic them with your weak hand.

"PERFECT PRACTICE IS PARAMOUNT TO PERFECTION UNDER STRESS."



add some realism by holding a 5- to 25-pound weight in that off hand.

I also train people in my couple's home defense class to hold a doll in that hand or a "swinger." A swinger is particularly useful if you think that off hand will be holding a five-year-old's hand during that fight. The swinger – which has a 5- to 30-pound weight suspended by cord from the arm of a discarded doll or oversized teddy bear – is a homemade device that adds realism to the drills. As the weight swings back and forth, you learn why facing forward with knees bent and thumb raised is so important.

All done? Nope.

Weak Hand Training

Just because you can shoot one-handed using the strong hand doesn't mean that is what you will get to do when the spit hits the fan. You have to practice with the other hand if you are truly serious about surviving the fight. What if the fight starts with the bad guy shooting you in the good hand as you held it up in defense of his attack? What if you broke it as the carjacker hit you with a crowbar?

There are several reasons to be good with your other hand, so where to start? First, brush your teeth with that hand. Really. To understand the necessary amount of training, use your toothbrush with your support hand for one minute every day. In about 10 sessions, you will start to get the hang of using that hand. Then, it will make shooting with the underused appendage much easier.

To get the gun to the support hand in training, there are two common techniques, the swipe and the cant-and-grab. To get it to the support hand in a gunfight, you'll probably just pick it up off the ground where it landed when your strong hand was injured.

Swipe Technique

To do this, swipe the support hand from the back/rear of the grip forward as the strong hand relaxes its grip on the pistol. The critical point is the trigger finger stays up on the frame and well clear of the trigger and trigger guard. Forward pressure with your finger in the wrong place, even in dry practice, is detrimental to successful mastery of this skill. Perfect practice is paramount to perfection under stress. The strong hand's thumb is raised and the support hand's thumb goes over that spot as the pistol is tilted slightly into the strong hand.

Cant-and-Grab Technique

The Cant-and-Grab technique requires a bit more practice, but in my opinion, allows more control of the pistol during the exchange. The pistol is canted, barrel toward the ground, exposing the highest point of the backstrap under the hammer or beavertail. The support hand comes over the top and takes the pistol's grip as the strong hand relaxes and comes off the grip.

As you did with the strong hand, drive the pistol toward the threat with the support hand. Your thumb should be raised, wrist rotated to the inside like a punch, knees bent and weight leaning forward. I don't have any of my students practice with objects in the support hand for obvious reasons – if that hand was working, you'd be using it, right?

Consider Reality

Are ammunition costs too high for you to practice your one-handed shooting? Skip dinner out and call that money an investment in your survivability. Or, just keep doing the dry-fire drills until it becomes first nature. Remember, of the sub group I studied, only seven of 500 got to use both hands in their gunfight. Be safe. **TT**

OPTIONS FOR LIVE FIRE DRILLS

SIRT (Shot Indicating Resetting Trigger)
Next Level Training makes outstanding training pistols.

AIRSOFT
These pistols allow you to shoot thousands of shots for $15. Get the pistol that matches your normal carry gun and the get most realistic weight/design you can find.

SNAP CAPS
Dozens of manufacturers make these. I use A-Zoom Snap Caps made by Lyman/Pachmayr, but if you look at Brownells or Cheaper Than Dirt, there are lots to choose from.

DRY FIRE
It's an age-old myth that you will break your pistol if you dry fire it. With the production methods and materials used, as well as design enhancements, it would take thousands and thousands of dry trigger presses to hurt a gun made since 1990. If you do, they make replacement parts. I have a first-generation Glock 17 with about 10,000 dry fire trigger presses and it still shoots great.

FOR MORE INFO

NEXT LEVEL TRAINING
www.nextleveltraining.com
360.933.4640





FITTING TRIBUTE

AXELSON TACTICAL AND SIONICS WEAPONS SYSTEMS HONOR SOME OF OUR FALLEN WARRIORS

BY TOM MARSHALL

> "ONE OF THE NAVY SEALS KILLED IN THAT OPERATION WAS PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS MATTHEW AXELSON."



THE ORIGIN OF THE AXE SPR IS QUITE SPECIAL, AND IT DOESN'T DISAPPOINT ON THE PERFORMANCE END EITHER.

The recent release of the movie "Lone Survivor," based on Marcus Luttrell's autobiographical book of the same name, brings to light the story of Operation: Red Wings. There's now ample information available about the operation itself, so I will leave that research to you if you're so inclined.

One of the Navy SEALs killed in that operation was Petty Officer 2nd Class Matthew Axelson. Matthew's brother, Jeff, through his company Axelson Tactical, recently commissioned a limited edition run of 100 AR-15 Special Purpose Rifles to commemorate the service of Petty Officer Axelson and his teammates.

Each rifle was hand built by SIONICS Weapon Systems. The weapons are both works of art and working art. They're not only good looking, they deliver the kind of performance one would expect from a rifle meant to honor the SEALs.

The test gun loaned to me by SIONICS was actually its pre-production prototype. The technical specs of my loaner prototype were identical to the final product, but lacked the commemorative engraving work. The photos accompanying this article were taken with a fully-finished production gun, so what you see in these pages is what you will get when you purchase an Axe SPR.

■ Axelson Tactical commissioned a limited edition run of AR-15 Special Purpose Rifles to commemorate the service of Petty Officer Matthew Axelson and his teammates.



■ The rifle comes standard with Magpul MBUS Pro flip-up sights

"WHAT I GOT WAS A TEST GUN THAT SHOT STRAIGHT AND RAN RELIABLY. IF YOU PURCHASE ONE OF THESE PACKAGES, YOU WILL GET MUCH MORE. YOU WILL GET A WORKING MONUMENT TO THOSE MEN WHO TAKE THE FIGHT TO AMERICA'S ENEMIES. THEY LIVE, AND HAVE DIED, TO PRESERVE THE AMERICAN LEGACY WE ALL HOPE TO PASS ON TO OUR GRANDCHILDREN."

WHAT YOU GET

The heart of any rifle is its barrel, and the Axe tribute gun is no different. SIONICS started with its 18-inch SPR barrel. It's made of 416 stainless with a .223 Wylde chamber and rifle-length gas system. The barrel is .776 inches thick behind the port and .716 inches in front of it. The gas block is standard .750 inches. The blocks are made by Geissele.

One of the things that, in my opinion, makes SIONICS stand out from the pack is that every one of its barrels is magnetic particle inspected and X-rayed before leaving the factory. For this particular rifle, the muzzle device is a Battlecomp 1.0 custom laser-engraved for the Axe rifle project.









■ Take a close look; you'll see the tribute to Axelson. ■ The bolt group is run by way of a VLTOR Gunfighter charging handle. ■ On this particular rifle, the muzzle device is a Battlecomp 1.0 custom laser-engraved. ■ The rifle is finished with a custom camouflage Cerakote.

The barrel is sheathed in a Geissele MK II SMR, which is a 15-inch free float rail with a full top rail. As per the current trend, the other three sides are left slick with cuts for modular rail sections. The rifle comes standard with Magpul MBUS Pro flip-up sights although, for a barrel of this length and quality, it would behoove you to spring for quality glass. In my tests, I used a Leopold VX-R 4-12x.

The rifle comes with a bolt that is high-pressure tested and magnetic particle inspected. The gas key is staked and, along with the bolt carrier, is NP3 coated for ease of maintenance and reduced friction. The bolt group is run by way of a VLTOR Gunfighter charging handle.

The lower half of this gun is equally impressive. There is an aluminum enhanced trigger guard and enhanced SOPMOD stock – both by B5 systems. The trigger is the Geissele SSA-E, which delivers a 3.5-pound pull in two stages: a 2-pound initial take-up followed by a 1.5-pound break. This was my first time behind one of these triggers, and I can confidently say that now I know what all the fuss is about.

The pistol grip is a BCM Gunfighter MOD 0 grip. The ambidextrous selector switch and takedown pins are both from Battle Arms Development.

Finally, the lower receiver extension is the VLTOR A5 system. This is a proprietary system that uses uniquely dimensioned (read: not compatible with any other buffer tube) buffer weights sitting on a rifle spring. VLTOR claims the system leads to increased reliability and reduced recoil. All of the testimony I've read or heard is universally positive.

The entire rifle is finished with a custom camouflage Cerakote. The color palate is vaguely similar to Multi-Cam,



but will not match any of your MC/OCP gear or uniforms. The coating was applied specifically to look like a "rattle can" paint job, in homage to all those serving on the sharp end who spray paint their weapons in the barracks basement or out behind the TOC.

Every rifle's coating pattern is going to be slightly unique. The butt stocks and pistol grips will be foliage green on half of the rifles, and coyote brown on the other half. You will not have a choice of furniture color. They are custom serial-numbered AXE01 through AXE99. The rifle features a number of custom engravings that are best summarized on the Axelson Tactical website:

Poseidon's three-pronged Trident for Matt, Danny and Mike. The lone star above the center prong for Marcus, the diamond it houses in represents four branches of the military and the trident it self symbolizes the SEAL Teams.

"Turbine 33 – NSDQ", (Night Stalkers Don't Quit) is engraved on the upper.

There are also a few other etchings on there as well if you look closely. They are self-explanatory for those who find them.

For reference, Turbine 33 was the call sign of the 160th bird that was lost in the operation. As previously mentioned, my test gun did not have this engraving on board. So, I didn't get a chance to look for the unnamed mystery etchings.

Then again, even if I had I wouldn't tell. You'll have to buy one and admire it until you find them all.

Don't expect this stately rifle to show up at your FFL in a cardboard box, either. The cases are Pelican, with a (true)

POINT SHOOTING

The Axelson tribute gun can carry most of your favorite loads to 600 meters without breaking a sweat. But what happens when you equip this – or any other – rifle with some high-power glass, the kind appropriate for long-distance brain surgery, and then find yourself in a close-quarters engagement?

"Point shooting" has been around for a long time, dating back at least to Fairbain and Sykes at the turn of the 20th century. For the unfamiliar, point shooting advocates using your body to aim instinctively and deliberately foregoing the use of your mechanical (iron) sights. It's primarily thought of as a handgun concept but, I believe, has a place in rifle-craft. If you run a red-dot and the battery dies or, conversely, your glass is too powerful for across-the-room distance, point shooting may be the tool you need. Here are some tips to keep in mind when training for this technique:

- Body alignment is critical: without the guide-rail of sights, how you position your body will become critical. Whatever your natural shooting stance, square your shoulders to the target as much as possible. Your rifle stock is directly attached to one of your shoulders so turning your shoulders will turn the gun. I try to think of my shoulders as the sight.

- Look where you want to hit: When not looking straight down the sights, some people have a tendency to want to look at everything else. Situational awareness is great, but make sure your head and eyes are oriented on the target. This will aid in keeping your body aligned as well.

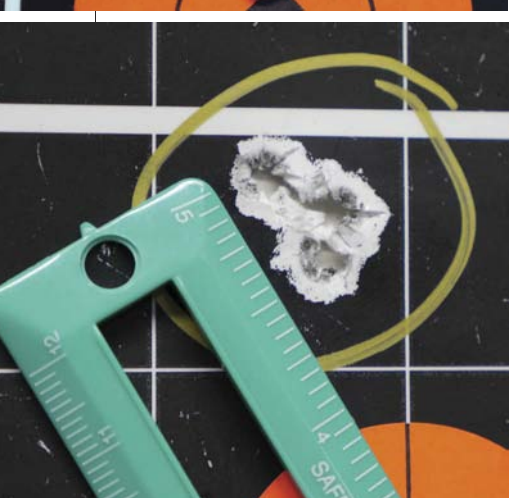
- Keep everything else the same: Many people use a cadence or mantra to help them shoot. "Front sight, trigger press" is a popular one. The potential pitfall here is when you take away the "front sight" part you may lose control of the "trigger press" part. Even though you are nullifying sight alignment and (to a degree) sight picture, none of the other fundamentals change when you point shoot.



■ Each of its barrels is magnetic particle inspected and X-rayed before leaving the factory.







■ The results from the Black Hills 40-gr. V-Max 1 with flier. ■ Results with the Black Hills 50-gr V-Max ■ Performance results from the Black Hills 50-gr V-Max 2.

PERFORMANCE RESULTS

LOAD	WEIGHT	1st	2nd	3rd	AVERAGE
Hornady	55gr	0.85	0.92	1.1	0.956667
Black Hills	50gr V-Max	1.95	0.55	0.62	1.04
Black Hills	40gr V-Max	0.85	0.56	0.41	0.606667

NOTES: Temperature: 96 degrees F

WIND: 6 mph

ELEVATION: 2,800 feet above sea level

Multi-Cam paint job of their own. Inside, the hard foam is laser custom-cut to fit the rifle and dyed Multi-Cam.

The foam is cut to house the wood presentation box that holds the three challenge coins accompanying each weapon. One of the coins is from SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team 1, Matt Axelson's team. Another is from SEAL Team 10. Both of these teams took part in Red Wings.

The third coin is billed as Matt's personal challenge coin. It is engraved with a likeness of Matt against the silhouette of Afghanistan. There is also a SEAL Trident and a purple heart. These personal coins are serial numbered to match the weapon they are issued (sold) with.

All together, the package is both rugged and beautiful. These rifles would be equally eye-catching on the firing line or over the fireplace. Of course, when it comes to AR-15s – especially those meant to honor the toughest of the tough – pretty paint and shiny coins are not going to cut it alone.

HOW IT PERFORMS

The first time I took this rifle out, it got passed around to some friends. We didn't get past the 50-yard line with it. We fed the gun a mixture of Federal, Hornady (in both 55-grain and 75-grain varieties) and Wolf WPA. Sometimes it was all mixed up in the same magazine.

We didn't suffer a single hiccup. No failures to feed, fire or eject. Shooting it close in felt a little bit sluggish. The Geissele SMR is rather substantial as modular forearms go. This, combined with the longer, heavier barrel explains the slight sense of unwieldiness I felt running CQB drills. Saying this, it certainly was no show-stopper and one look at this rifle will tell you it was never meant to be a race gun.

I also have to say, I'm not a huge fan of the Battlecomp. I had read reports of people experiencing a distinct downward push while using it. While running-and-gunning at close range, it didn't seem so bad. When I benched the rifle for my 100-yard group test, I definitely felt the muzzle dipping.

Let's talk about the 100-yard test, since that's what this rifle was really made for. I shot all my groups sitting, off my daypack. Unfortunately, I didn't have enough of the 75-grain stuff to group it properly. What I did have was Hornady 55-grain FMJ, Black Hills 50-grain



■ The rifle features an 18-inch SPR barrel and has a rifle-length gas system.

V-Max and Black Hills 40-grain V-Max.

The SIONICS SPR barrel has a 1:8 twist, which made me worried about the 40-grain stuff. I was worried it would either destabilize or disintegrate in flight – neither happened. In fact, I got a pair of rounds inside ¼ MOA. Unfortunately, I pulled the last shot and opened that group up to ¾ MOA.

My other two groups with the 40-grain V-Max were similar: two rounds in 0.4 inches, with a flier out to about 0.85-inch followed by two rounds in 0.5-inch with a flier all the way out to 1.25 inches.

I'd love to tell you that the light bullets combined with a 6 MPH crosswind was throwing my rounds, but it's been the better part of eight months since I've practiced past 50 yards, which is probably the root cause here.

The takeaway for you should be that I was consistently printing two-out-of-three rounds at a rate of ¼ to ½ MOA. That's the rifle's true capability.

The 50-grain V-Max was a little more consistent. My first group was wild at almost two inches. However, my next two groups were 0.55- and 0.62-inch, respectively – and that's for all three rounds. There were no fliers. Hornady's 55-grain FMJ did not perform quite as well overall, but was consistent. My groups were 0.85-, 0.92- and 1.10 inches – no fliers in any group.

If I can repeatedly get pairs into ¼-inch from the 100-yard line, I'm fully confident that the right shooter with the right glass could push this weapon to 500 yards or better.

WHAT YOU'LL SPEND

The price listed on the Axelson Tactical website ($3,695) is going to put this out of reach for many shooters. But for those who can afford it, know that a portion of the proceeds will go to the Navy SEAL Foundation, the Lone Survivor Foundation and the Matt Axelson Foundation.

What I got was a test gun that shot straight and ran reliably. If you purchase one of these packages, you will get much more. You will get a working monument to those men who take the fight to America's enemies. They live, and have died, to preserve the American legacy we all hope to pass on to our grandchildren. God bless you men, damn few. **TT**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Tom Marshall is a graduate of the United States Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, where he earned a Bachelor's Degree, a US Coast Guard 3rd Mate's License and a commission as a US Army Officer. Since separating from active duty, he has been working in the private security and corrections industries. His maritime, military and security experience have taken him to 19 countries. Tom's been a freelance gun writer for about two years. He also contributes to *Firepower.*

FOR MORE INFO

AXELSON TACTICAL
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SIONICS WEAPONS SYSTEMS
SionicsWeaponSystems.com
sales@sionicweaponsystems.com



TACTICAL AMMUNITION

THE BIGGEST BULLET OR HARDEST HITTER IS NOT ALWAYS THE BEST LOAD FOR THE SITUATION

BY BOB CAMPBELL

LEAD PHOTO COURTESY OF HPR BLACK OPS

WHEN SELECTING AMMUNITION FOR CRITICAL USE, NOTHING SHOULD BE LEFT TO CHANCE. THE CARTRIDGES MUST BE COMPLETELY RELIABLE. THE AMMUNITION MUST FEED, CHAMBER, FIRE AND EJECT PROPERLY. TERMINAL PERFORMANCE, EFFECT ON TARGET AND TACTICAL PENETRATION ARE IMPORTANT.

When choosing ammunition for personal defense or a service load for institutional use, I follow the same guidelines.

Narrowing the choice isn't easy. One course is to mirror the choice of a major agency. Few of us are able to test the tons of ammunition expended in such programs. One of our major state agencies expended 228,000 rounds in one test program and a European nation fired 700,000 rounds in choosing the single handgun issued to all military and police units. Ammunition used in such programs has a good recommendation for selection.

Service-grade performance is important and this reliability cannot be compromised. All of the loads mentioned in this review have been personally tested. While it may be redundant to re-test the FBI's choice, I do so with my personal firearms. I also used ammunition from less-established makers and tested these in the same manner. As an example, recently I found that a new company, HPR Ammunition, offers service-grade loads worthy of at least occasional deployment.

TESTING

I do not jump into ballistic testing. Sure, it is exciting but the fundamentals of function must be met first.

To begin, I soak an example of the prospective loading in water, oil and solvent, respectively. (I do not subject training and practice loads to the same program.) The cartridges will be retrieved after an overnight soaking and wiped off. They must fire normally. This indicates good case mouth and primer seal.

If the loading passes this test, I proceed to a chambering test. Case mouth seal and the proper roll or taper crimp – for cartridges used in self-loading firearms – are proofed in this test. I conduct this step using proper safety procedure at the firing range. The same cartridge is chambered 8 to 10 times. Each time the bolt or slide is racked and the cartridge is chambered, I check the load for bullet setback.

If the projectile has suffered a setback, the cartridge integrity isn't what it should be. Only if the load has passed this test do I proceed to cycle, function and accuracy testing.



The most-important single attribute of a load is cartridge integrity. (Hornady)



> **"WITH THE MAJOR AGENCIES REPORTING UP TO HALF OF THEIR CRITICAL INCIDENTS INVOLVING FELONS BEHIND COVER, A LOADING WITH THE ABILITY TO PENETRATE LIGHT COVER IS DESIRABLE."**

The maker's offering must feed, chamber, fire or eject normally. It must not be difficult to clear the chamber when a round is chambered.

The load must attain at least the standards that have been set with training ammunition and previous service loads. All tactical-grade loads are not match-grade-accurate but some are. With these baselines covered and reliability established, terminal ballistics and barrier penetration are tested.



"... THE BLACK HILLS AMMUNITION 77-GRAIN OTM IS PROVEN IN SERVICE IN THE WAR AGAINST TERROR."



■ Among the most heavily tested and effective new loads is the Hornady Critical Duty. (Hornady)

WHAT IS A TACTICAL LOAD?

There is no pat answer for this question. Some tactical loads are loaded lighter than standard, some are heavier. Others perform a certain task better. You have to do the homework and understand the pluses and minuses of each loading. No load can compensate for poor marksmanship.

Some loads enhance control. Among the first tactical loads introduced were Remington's Magnum revolver loads, including a 240-grain/1,000-fps .44 Magnum load and a 125-grain/1,250-fps .357 Magnum load. These were intended to give working cops a manageable but effective loading that was sensibly lighter than a true Magnum.

The Federal 165-grain HydraShok in .40 caliber was loaded to 180-grain velocity, thus giving less felt recoil.

Today, Buffalo Bore Ammunition offers tactical loads in .357 Magnum that allow those of us using carry-grade revolvers to control the handgun much more efficiently. While slower and producing less energy, these tactical loads feature bullets designed to expand well at lower velocity. The Barnes X bullet used in these loads is ideally suited to the task.

Modern tactical handgun ammunition designed for 9mm, .40- and .45-caliber handguns utilizes a bonded core bullet. The lead core and the jacket are bonded together by design. This is in contrast to the older lead core and copper cup design. These bullets are intended to maintain their integrity when penetrating a variety of obstacles between the shooter and the target. Wallboard, sheet steel and auto glass are commonly encountered obstacles.

Bullets such as Hornady Manufacturing's XTP were developed because of the failures of older generation projectiles to fully penetrate intermediate obstacles and incapacitate subjects. Federal's original HydraShok was toughened into one of the first tactical loadings. Federal also did important work in producing a 55-grain .223 JSP with improved tactical penetration.

Winchester has designed several outstanding loads. The present Winchester PDX loading is a development that has seen wide use and the FBI adopted the Winchester 230-grain Bonded Core load. The Hornady Critical Duty load is a development of the Critical Defense technology. The Critical Duty load meets stringent guidelines for penetration and expansion. With the major agencies reporting up to half of their critical incidents involving felons behind cover, a loading with the ability to penetrate light cover is desirable. These agencies cannot plan for the average incident but must be prepared for the worst-case scenario.

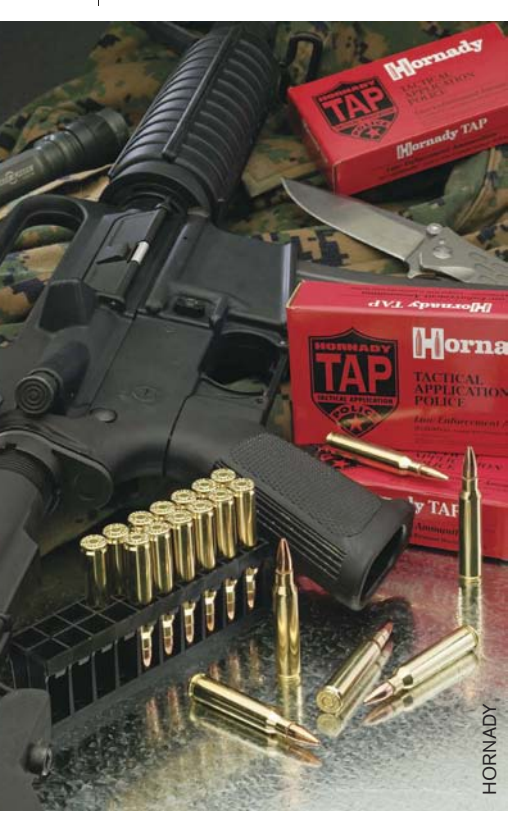
Tactical loads provide the best product for public safety and threat engagement. These loads are typically offered in 124- and 147-grain bullet weight in 9mm, although the Hornady Critical Duty is a 135-grain load. The .40-caliber loads are usually 180 grains and .45 ACP loads are usually 230 grains. However, the Speer 200-grain +P load has given good results in tactical testing, so has the Hornady 200-grain XTP. The Hornady 220-grain Flex Lock breaks 1,000 fps from a 5-inch barrel Colt 1911 and offers excellent performance.

When you look at the performance of these bonded core loads, you may realize you do not need this type of performance for home defense. A load that expands more quickly, which offers less penetration, may be desirable. However, if you



■ Some modern loads expand by impact rather than fluid dynamics. This is the Hornady Critical Defense. (Hornady)

need this type of penetration, these loads stand tall. Other tactical loads are actually designed to limit penetration. A load close to a standard weight but which offers good accuracy and rapid fragmentation may be desirable in certain situations such as hostage rescue. The HPR Black-Ops is among these.



HORNADY

RIFLE LOADS

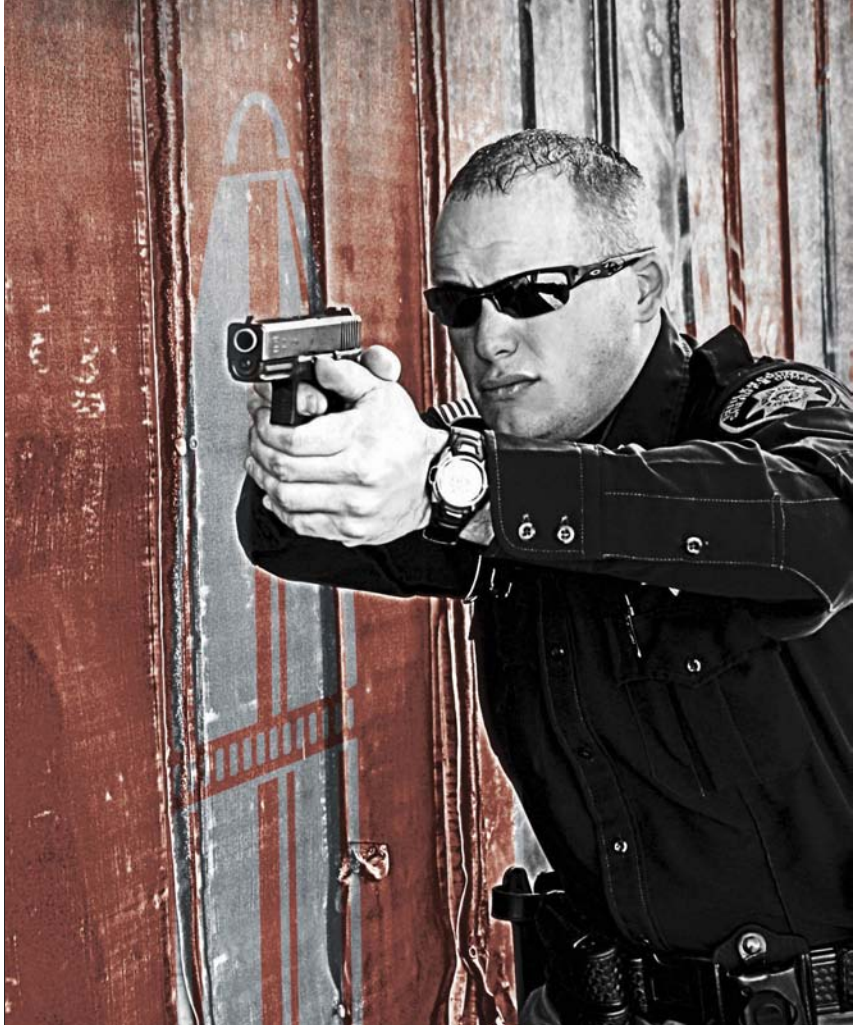
Most rifles dispose of more energy than is needed for personal defense. Rifles are also designed to be used at longer distances. As an example the military has noted that the 5.56mm NATO cartridge loses its lethality rapidly after about 125 yards or when velocity trails off to less than 2,500 fps. This is seldom a problem with the AR-15 unless an SBR is used. However, the original 55-grain FMJ needed improvement.

Most of the 55-grain JSP bullets available when the AR-15 was first issued to police were designed for varmint hunting. Tactical penetration was deemed inadequate. Most of these loads were far more frangible than JHP pistol loads. Federal's 55-grain Tactical Bonded Softpoint has seen wide use and given yeoman service with many agencies. At one time, there was a misguided recommendation for the 40-grain loads in police service, based on fragmentation and public safety. These loads often disintegrate on light cover and intermediate objects, and cannot be trusted for service use.

Decades ago, Jeff Hoffman of Black Hills Ammunition offered a 60-grain JSP load for service use. There have been other developments and today the 55-grain load remains popular, but the heavier-weight bullets are also in use. As an example, Black Hills Ammunition offers both the 68-grain Heavy Match and the 69-grain Sierra Match King. In the more-accurate class of rifles, these heavy bullets demonstrate excellent accuracy. These match-grade-accurate loads are popular for their accuracy and dependable function. Winchester offers the 69-grain JSP, a load that expands like a .30-caliber bullet and does not fragment.

There are popular choices that offer superior accuracy coupled with a rapidly fragmenting bullet. The Hornady V-Max line is one and the Winchester Ballistic Silvertip another. These loads will solve most defensive problems without heavy penetration.

Another class of load has been developed. These are the 75–77-grain .223 loads. Designed to buck wind drift at 250–300 yards, these loads are often deployed by designated marksmen. The advantages of these loads are seen primarily at long range. One of these, the Black Hills Ammunition 77-grain OTM, is proven in service in the war against terror. These loads have also proven effective at close range. They are not strictly necessary at moderate range but offer superior penetration.



■ Tactical load selection is serious business — working cops know this. (Hornady)

SHOTGUNS

Tactical shotgun loads are reduced recoil loads, both in buckshot and slug versions. These loads do not have the total energy of full power or Magnum buckshot loads. The shot loads demonstrate a superior pattern.

At seven to 15 yards – ideal shotgun range – the Remington Managed Recoil load exhibits a tight pattern that is ideal for superior wound potential. Buckshot tends to travel in pairs and these loads provide excellent performance. The Managed Recoil load from Remington is a No. 8 pellet load, rather than the typical No. 9 pellet load. This is another reason recoil is much lighter. The lower-velocity buckshot loads create a tight pattern.

A relatively new player is the Hornady Critical Defense line. This load has demonstrated a clean powder burn, a good tight pattern and excellent overall performance.

Tactical slugs should be carefully considered. Many of us with law enforcement experience have arrived after the fact in shotgun shootings. We prefer the effect of the solid slug. A full-power slug, however, produces significant recoil.

Loads that feature lighter recoil, such as Remington's Managed Recoil Slugger, are preferred for use inside of 25 yards. They also hit hard at longer range. However, the slower loads have more drop and less effect than full-power slugs past 50 yards.

If you are trying to turn the shotgun into a rifle, careful thought and range work should go into slug choices. The tactical slug is often very accurate and exhibits good wound potential. The full-power slug often fragments to an extent and offers even better wound potential.

OPTIONS ABOUND

Today, there are many excellent loads available. Let reliability be your guide. Consider accuracy, penetration, expansion and the intended audience before settling on a choice. A number of loads will give excellent performance. The rest is up to you. **TT**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

FEDERAL PREMIUM AMMUNITION
FederalPremium.com
(800) 379-1732

HORNADY MANUFACTURING
Hornady.com
(800) 338-3220

SPEER AMMO
Speer-Ammo.com
(800) 379-1732

HPR AMMUNITION
HPRAmmo.com
(928) 468-0223

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Robert "Bob" Campbell is a writer in the firearms, personal defense and outdoors field with more than 4,000 published articles, columns and reviews, and 10 books. Bob holds a degree in criminal justice and served as patrol sergeant, patrol lieutenant and other assignments. His work spans subjects as diverse as history, psychology, ballistics and police procedure. His primary qualifications are a keen interest in the shooting sports and a genuine interest in his fellow shooters. His personal interests include Joyce, the grandchildren and the Corvette.

TACTICAL CLOTHES

CLOTHES THAT HELP, NOT HINDER, YOUR OPS

BY SEAN COOPER / PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURERS

YOU MAY HAVE YOUR FAVORITE WEAPON IN HAND, BUT YOU'RE NOT TRULY PREPARED UNLESS YOU'RE DRESSED IN TACTICAL GEAR HEAD-TO-TOE. NO, WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT LOOKING COOL WHILE STROLLING THROUGH THE MALL.

Tactical clothing moves, stretches, wears and most importantly conceals you, your gear and your tactical advantage. Tactical gear can provide a much-needed advantage by offering superior breathability, durability and freedom of movement.

Tactical clothing is a lot more than just pants. It also includes jackets, shirts, scarves, boots and kneepads. To make sure you're ready, we've handpicked the top tactical clothing to bring along on your next training exercise or operation. **TT**

VERTX / PRODUCT: GUNFIGHTER MULTICAM SHIRT / WEBSITE: WEARVERTX.COM / MSRP: $110



IT IS NO COINCIDENCE THE GUNFIGHTER IS Vertx's best-selling shirt. The camouflage design aids concealment by allowing you to blend in with your surroundings. The high-quality shirt offers the durability of NYCO with the dependable performance of Vertx. The hidden bicep pockets are perfect for storing money, ID or other small sensitive items from prying eyes and hands.

SPECS

- Made of 50% nylon, 50% cotton
- Comfortable and durable shirt made of tactical uniform material
- Soft comfortable feel for extended missions
- Stand-up collar protects neck from slings
- Features loop VELCRO patch on both upper arms for unit patch
- Hidden zippered bicep pockets for easy access to contents

5.11 TACTICAL / PRODUCT: TACLITE PRO PANT / WEBSITE: 511TACTICAL.COM / MSRP: $51



5.11'S TACLITE PRO PANTS ARE AS COMFORTABLE around the house with the kids as they are in the wilderness or on the back of a Bearcat before serving a high-risk warrant. The TacLite Pro's action waistband and full gusseted crotch make movement an unencumbered breeze. The Teflon fabric treatment protects the TacLite Pro from stains caused by weather, environmental conditions or the coffee you spilled when switching hands to salute (to this day I cannot carry coffee in my right hand).

SPECS

- Lightweight, breathable, comfortable
- Material: 65% polyester and 35% poly-cotton ripstop
- Two cargo pockets and magazine/cell phone pocket
- Signature rear strap and slash pocket design; rear web strap
- External knife pocket

CONDOR OUTDOOR / PRODUCT: STEALTH OPERATOR PANTS / WEBSITE: CONDOROUTDOOR.COM / MSRP: $50



ENJOY THE EASE OF STRETCHABLE POLY-COTTON with spandex. Condor Outdoor's Stealth Operator Pants offer the utmost in comfort. The pants' lightweight material offers plenty of maneuverability, whether out for a leisurely walk when undercover or making a fast egress. The Stealth Operator Pants are constructed from breathable materials. This versatility allows you to pack light and plan for a variety of weather or environmental conditions while remaining comfortable and focused on your appointed tasks. The pants' six pockets ensure you will have the storage where you need it and when you need it.

SPECS

- Zipper fly with button, belt loops and self-adjusting waistband
- Two front-hand pockets and deep back pockets with reinforced edges
- 60% polyester, 37% cotton and 3% spandex

Product Guide

5.11 TACTICAL / PRODUCT: TACTICAL FLEECE JACKET / WEBSITE: 511TACTICAL.COM / MSRP: $111



NOT ONLY IS THE TACTICAL FLEECE JACKET durable, it can withstand the toughest of windstorms Mother Nature can dish out, keeping you warm and comfortable when you can't be home with loved ones or watching the game. The 5.11's Tactical Fleece Jacket features a unique backup belt system and hidden pockets. There are even zippered hand-warmer pockets for additional comfort while on a stakeout, standing watch or toeing the line at roll call.

SPECS

- All-weather fleece
- Back-Up Belt System, hidden chest pockets
- Abrasion-resistant collar, shoulders and elbows
- Interior pockets; zippered exterior hand-warmer pockets
- Side zippers and snaps

VERTX / PRODUCT: ORIGINAL TACTICAL PANTS / WEBSITE: WEARVERTX.COM / MSRP: $55



DON'T LET THE PLAIN VANILLA NAME FOOL YOU: Vertx Men's Original Tactical Pants are a notch above the rest. Made of 98% cotton, these pants provide the maximum in comfort and breathability. Vertx Original Tactical Pants are low profile enough that to the untrained eye, they look like just another pair of khakis. This is the ultimate form of camouflage and gives the wearer the tactical advantage of hiding in plain sight.

SPECS

- Gusseted crotch for prolonged comfort in almost any position
- Side-stretch waistband and higher rise in the back
- Concealed zippered pocket on right side
- 98% cotton and 2% Lycra

VERTX / PRODUCT: VERTX INTEGRITY BASE JACKET / WEBSITE: WEARVERTX.COM / MSRP: $160

WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU COMBINE VERTX'S patented Integrity Base with a jacket? You get a versatile coat perfect for wearing alone or as an under layer. Breathable, soft and lightweight, Vertx Men's Integrity Base Jacket has it all. The power-stretch side panels and gusseted sides provide ease of movement, no matter what your situation.

SPECS

- 100% nylon
- Hand warmer pockets
- Breathable and lightweight
- Power-stretch side panels and gusseted sides for ease of movement



ROTHCO / PRODUCT: MILITARY COMBAT SHIRT / WEBSITE: ROTHCO.COM / MSRP: $58

ROTHCO'S MILITARY COMBAT SHIRT MORE THAN lives up to the name. With a melting point of 230 degrees Fahrenheit, this shirt is both breathable and lightweight – plus it will outlast you when the action gets hot! Carry your extra gear in its zippered sleeve storage pockets. Its collar acts as a turtleneck to keep you toasty warm on those extra cool days.

SPECS

- Polyester fabric
- Breathable and lightweight
- Resistant against melting and dripping
- Features gusseted sleeves



Product Guide

BLACKHAWK! / PRODUCT: LIGHTWEIGHT TACTICAL PANT / WEBSITE: BLACKHAWK.COM / MSRP: $70



BLACKHAWK!, A HOUSEHOLD NAME IN tactical gear, doesn't disappoint with its latest pants offering, the Men's Lightweight Tactical Pant. They're crafted from a durable blend of 65% polyester and 35% cotton. Double layering in the pants' back and knees offer extra durability when taking down a suspect, shooting from a kneeling position at the range or belly crawling under the wire.

SPECS

- 65% percent polyester, 35% cotton
- High-quality YKK zippers and Prym snaps
- Hidden, expandable waistband slides
- Features top-opening mag pouch pockets on legs

CONDOR OUTDOOR / PRODUCT: ALPHA MICRO FLEECE JACKET / WEBSITE: CONDOROUTDOOR.COM / MSRP: $50



IT'S HARD TO BEAT A HIGH-QUALITY jacket for $50. Condor Outdoor delivers on the goods with its Men's Alpha Micro Fleece Jacket. Featuring pockets-galore with a vertical check pocket and not one, but two, slash hand pockets. You'll have plenty of extra storage for gear, hand warmers, spare mags, radios etc. The sleeves extend and feature a thumb hole for added comfort when wearing gloves in cold temps.

SPECS

- Full front zipper and adjustable drawstring waistband
- Made from 100% polyester fleece
- Features a two-inch extendible sleeve with thumb-hole
- Nylon abrasion-reinforced collar, shoulder and forearm.

BLACKHAWK! / PRODUCT: HPFU PERFORMANCE JACKET / WEBSITE: BLACKHAWK.COM / MSRP: $136

THOSE LOOKING FOR A REVOLUTIONARY JACKET, should look no further than the BLACKHAWK!'s I.T.S. HPFU Performance Jacket. The tuxedo-cut design makes it ideal for easy access to your most critical gear. Choose from four colors, including olive drab and camouflage.

SPECS

- Features textured elbow patches for abrasion resistance
- Tuxedo-cut design
- Integrated elbow pad pockets



BLACKHAWK! / PRODUCT: PERFORMANCE COTTON TACTICAL LONG SLEEVE SHIRT / WEBSITE: BLACKHAWK.COM / MSRP: $60



BLACKHAWK! INTRODUCES A BRAND-NEW look with the same high quality you've come to expect. The versatile shirt features pen slots at top of the chest pocket flaps that can also be used as cord-routing holes for an MP3 player, radio or recording device. Inspection ready, this shirt is constructed from top-notch material that's not only wrinkle-free, it's stain- and fade-resistant, too.

SPECS

- 88% cotton, 12% polyester
- Expandable, angled, top-opening flap chest pockets
- Pen slots at top of chest pocket flaps also can be used as cord-routing holes for media player
- Lightweight

Product Guide

TRU-SPEC / PRODUCT: T.R.U. XTREME PANTS / WEBSITE: TRUSPEC.COM / MSRP: $134



BLEND IN WITH YOUR SURROUNDINGS WITH TRU-SPEC Men's Tactical Response Uniform Xtreme Pants. The pants' camouflage design means you won't stick out like a sore thumb. With two bellowed upper- and lower leg cargo pockets, these pants offer plenty of storage, but the diamond shaped gusseted crotch and articulated knees will win you over for day-to-day comfort.

SPECS

- 50% nylon, 50% cotton
- Articulated knees with SuperFabric external knee pockets
- Features comfort fit slider waistband
- Diamond shaped gusseted crotch
- Hidden front and back internal handcuff key pockets in waistband
- 2 leg cargo pockets that expand into a large space
- Hidden internal front zipper pockets in both leg cargo pockets
- 2 knife/accessory pockets with stiff fused inner lining on both sides

5.11 TACTICAL / PRODUCT: 5.11 TACTICAL SHIRT – LONG SLEEVE / WEBSITE: 511TACTICAL.COM / MSRP: $56



THREE WORDS SUM UP THIS COTTON CANVAS SHIRT: comfortable, durable and functional. Not only is it comfortable to wear, it offers plenty of storage. With six pockets, there's ample room for all your gear. There's even a hidden button down collar for those chilly evenings.

SPECS

- 100% breathable cotton
- High-quality triple-stitching
- Plenty of storage
- Comfortable, durable and functional
- Melamine buttons won't melt, burn or crack

TRU-SPEC / PRODUCT: T.R.U. XTREME SHIRT / WEBSITE: TRUSPEC.COM / MSRP: $134



ARE YOU LOOKING FOR THE IDEAL TACTICAL SHIRT to accompany your Tru-Spec Tactical pants? You've found your perfect match in Tactical Response Uniform Xtreme Shirt. Tru-Spec is a brand name synonymous with quality. If it's good enough for the U.S. military, it should be good enough for you.

SPECS

- Lightweight
- Ample pockets
- 50% nylon, 50% cotton
- Features hook and loop closure
- Mandarin collar can be worn up or down
- Articulated elbows for ease of movement
- Adjustable hook and loop cuff

TRU-SPEC / PRODUCT: 24-7 SERIES TACTICAL SOFTSHELL JACKET / WEBSITE: TRUSPEC.COM / MSRP: $122



TRU-SPEC'S 24-7 TACTICAL SOFTSHELL JACKET IS THE perfect coat to wear underneath your bulkier jacket. This high-quality softshell is guaranteed to keep your core warm. Not only is the Softshell Jacket lightweight, it is water and wind resistant, too. The 24-7 Tactical Softshell has ample room to conceal your favorite holstered firearms, large or small.

SPECS

- Lightweight, wind and water resistant
- 90% nylon, 10% spandex
- Hidden covered zipper closures and mesh lining
- Two rear zipper pockets

Product Guide

PROPPER / PRODUCT: MEN'S ACU TROUSER / WEBSITE: PROPPER.COM / MSRP: $50



INSPIRED BY THE MILITARY, PROPPER IS A name you can trust. Propper's ACU Trouser combines the comfort of cotton with the functionality of polyester. No need to worry about shrinkage in the wash: the pants are shrink and wrinkle resistant and a top uniform choice for any department.

SPECS

- 65% polyester, 35% cotton blend
- Hook and loop closure
- External openings for knee pads

VOODOO TACTICAL / PRODUCT: COMBAT SHIRT / WEBSITE: VOODOOTACTICAL.NET / MSRP: $39



IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR COMFORT, YOU'VE COME to the right place. Voodoo Tactical's Combat Shirt is the cream of the crop for tactical shirts. With Velcro and zipper pockets, it has plenty of storage. Suitable as an outer layer in warm conditions, Voodoo Tactical's Combat Shirt is ready to serve double duty under a plate carrier or vest.

SPECS

- 100% percent cotton
- Rip-stop poly-cotton sleeves
- Velcro and zipper pockets
- Adjustable cuffs

ROTHCO / PRODUCT: SPECIAL OPS TACTICAL SOFTSHELL JACKET / WEBSITE: ROTHCO.COM / MSRP: $115



BRING THE DURABILITY OF A SPECIAL ops jacket on your next tactical training exercise. It has plenty of hidden features. Hide your hood in the jacket's zipper pouch when not in use. If it rains, no need to fret – the coat is fully waterproof.

SPECS

- 100% polyester
- Fully waterproof
- Breathable and lightweight
- Includes arm zippered shoulder pockets

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The author showcases his AR.

A WELL-DRESSED AR

SUPERCHARGE YOUR AR TO MAKE IT MORE ACCURATE, VERSATILE AND DEPENDABLE

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BRAD FITZPATRICK

"... THERE HAS BEEN AN EXPLOSION IN AFTERMARKET ADD-ONS TO SUPERCHARGE YOUR AR RIFLE, AND THE SHOOTING INDUSTRY IS AWASH WITH NEW TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS."

BURRIS AR-1X / WEBSITE: BURRIS.COM / MSRP: $422

IN ITS MOST BASIC FORM, THE AR RIFLE IS A FUNCTIONAL, ACCURATE AND DEPENDABLE WEAPON, WHICH WORKS WELL FOR SELF-DEFENSE, LAW ENFORCEMENT, VARMINT AND PREDATOR CONTROL, AND COMPETITIVE SHOOTING. HOWEVER, WHY BE BASIC?

There's never been a better time to outfit your rifle with all the add-ons you'll need to turn it from a stock gun to a semi-custom rifle that fits your needs. In recent years, there's been an explosion in aftermarket add-ons to supercharge your AR, and the shooting industry is awash with new technology and innovative products designed to meet the needs of the country's growing AR fan base.

From high-tech optics to handguards, triggers and stocks, the following is a list of some of the best options to trick out your new black gun. **TT**



The Burris AR-1X.

The AR-1X from Burris is an ideal sight for rapid shooting in close quarters. It allows you to shoot with both eyes open for maximum situational awareness while providing a center dot etched lens for rapid target acquisition.

A single lithium AA battery powers the unit. The AR-1X allows the operator to change the reticle from black to red or green so it's useful in any light condition as your need dictates. Holdover lines out to 600 yards aid long-range shooting accuracy. For instance, at 100 yards you aim using the bottom of the 4.4 MOA center dot, and at 200 yards use the center of the dot as your aiming point with standard 5.56 loads. At close quarters, the large center dot serves as a great reference for both-eyes-open shooting.

The horizontal bars and gaps below the center dot subtend 18 inches at the prescribed distance. The Burris sight is light (13.2 ounces) and extremely durable. It's a great sight for defensive work and 3-Gun competition.

DIAMONDHEAD SIGHTING SYSTEM /

WEBSITE: DIAMONDHEAD-USA.COM / MSRP: $238 FOR THE FRONT AND REAR COMBO

There's no shortage of available iron sights for your AR combat gun, so what makes the Diamondhead system different?

For starters, the rear aperture has a diamond-shaped opening, which may seem like a marketing gimmick until you actually shoot with the sight. The diamond opening helps naturally align the front sight and makes it quick to center on target.

The front and rear flip-up sights are both made of aluminum alloy, and they are both diamond shaped, which means it won't snag or hang on gear or other items when you raise the gun; plus, the sights remain protected. The rear aperture has a fine and course opening, perfect for quick shots at close range, as well as longer shots where more precision is required. The rear sight offers precise .5 MOA windage adjustments, and the design is both user-friendly and very robust.

If iron sights are going to be your main optic on the rifle, you want sights that are precise and durable, and Diamondhead meets that criteria. If you're using irons as backup, you'll need them in the worst situation imaginable. In that case, you'll want sights that are tough and allow you to get on target in a hurry. In that situation, the Diamondhead Sighting System is ideal.



A close look at the Diamondhead sighting system.



The author's gun has a Cerakote finish.

CERAKOTE FINISH / WEBSITE: CERAKOTEGUNCOATINGS.COM / MSRP: Prices vary

If you want a truly custom-looking gun with a durable exterior, consider having your rifle sent to a Cerakote applicator. According to the Cerakote website, the process of Cerakoting is "a ceramic-based finish that can be applied to metals, plastics, polymers and wood. The unique formulation used for Cerakote ceramic coating enhances a number of physical performance properties, including abrasion/wear resistance, corrosion resistance, chemical resistance, impact strength and hardness."

Many companies now treat guns with Cerakote from the factory. It offers a chance to customize your rifle (Cerakote offers a huge range of color options), but it is also practical for field operations. For example, varmint and predator hunters coat their rifles for increased concealment and protection from even the worst elements.

A GUN WITH THE GOODS

IF YOU WANT AN AR THAT ALREADY COMES WITH A CERAKOTE FINISH, CHECK OUT DANIEL DEFENSE'S OUTSTANDING NEW M4 CARBINE V5 LW MIL SPEC + (SHOWN HERE).

CRIMSON TRACE MVF 515 /

WEBSITE: CRIMSONTRACE.COM
MSRP: RED LASER $429

If your rifle has accessory rails on the handguard, the MVF (Modular Vertical Foregrip) is a must have. Not only does it serve as a functional vertical foregrip with ample texturing for a secure and comfortable hold, it contains a 150/200 lumen light and a red or green laser. It's also available with infrared making it the perfect tool for competing in events such as Crimson Trace's popular Midnight Three Gun event held in Oregon each August.

The MVF-515 offers a lot of accessories in one convenient package, and it is made of tough, lightweight 6061-T6 aircraft-grade aluminum. Buttons on the side of the unit allow you to instantly select from a variety of settings, including constant beam and strobe and a master on/off switch to shut down the unit entirely and save the battery.

I used one of these units on a night hog eradication mission in east Texas and quickly found that the MVF-515 is both intuitive to use and quickly becomes a critical part of your weapon system. I could instantly illuminate the scene with the touch of a button. Even in complete darkness, I could switch on the IR beam and hunt using night vision goggles. Whether you carry a rifle as a member of a law enforcement team, to protect your home or to win money in competition, the MVF-515 is one accessory you shouldn't be without.



The Crimson Trace MVF 515.

"IT ALLOWS YOU TO SHOOT WITH BOTH EYES OPEN FOR MAXIMUM SITUATIONAL AWARENESS WHILE PROVIDING A CENTER DOT ETCHED LENS FOR RAPID TARGET ACQUISITION."

TAC-CON 3MR TRIGGER /

WEBSITE: TACCONUSA.COM / MSRP: $395

Available for AR-15s and AR-10s, the Tac-Con 3MR trigger is easy to install and available with left- or right-handed controls. In semi-auto mode, the trigger is crisp and clean, offering a 4.5-pound trigger pull for accurate shots out to the longest ranges. It also allows the rifle to be used in a third mode that offers the shortest reset possible for extremely fast split times.

According to Tac-Con, "The positive reset characteristic is achieved by transferring the force from the bolt carrier through the trigger assembly to assist the trigger back onto the front sear. As a result, this gives the firearm the fastest reset possible."

In standard semi-auto mode, it offers a very clean and precise trigger pull, and the quick reset allows for extremely rapid follow-up shots.



Tac-Con's 3MR trigger.

FOXPRO FOXGRIP / WEBSITE: GOFOXPRO.COM / MSRP: $89.95



The AR platform is a favorite weapon among varmint and predator hunters, and FOXPRO has developed an ingenious new pistol grip that doubles as a remote for your FOXPRO caller.

Serious hunters know that even the slightest movement can give away your location and spook wary predators, but the FOXPRO allows you to operate your call without moving more than a finger. The FOXGRIP will execute a single command in the field: Preset 1, Preset 2, toggle Mute on/off or toggle Auxiliary on/off. Having these controls at your fingertips means you can keep your eyes up and on the lookout for an incoming 'yote.

The unit runs on one CR 2032 lithium battery. According to FOXPRO, it is good for more than 3,000 actuations. The curved backstrap and textured finger grip surfaces make this one of the most comfortable grips on the market… whether you're a predator hunter or not. If you've ever done much coyote, fox or bobcat hunting, there's a good chance you've had one or two predators slip in without notice. Likely because your eyes were on your caller or remote and not looking for game. With the FOXGRIP, you'll eliminate those mistakes.

The FOXPRO FOXGRIP.

DANIEL DEFENSE 16-INCH GOVERNMENT PROFILE BARREL /

WEBSITE: DANIELDEFENSE.COM / MSRP: $289

In addition to manufacturing quality guns, Daniel Defense offers outstanding barrels, and the 16-inch Government Profile Barrel is a perfect example. The 16-inch Government Profile Mid-Length barrel is cold-hammer forged for outstanding durability and accuracy and has a 1:7 twist for 5.56 loads. The barrel features a forged chamber and a heavy phosphate coating. According to the Daniel Defense website, "during the hammering process a mandrel is inserted into the bore while the carbide steel hammers shape the barrel around the mandrel creating the chamber, lands, and grooves. In addition to the aforementioned benefits, the Cold Hammer Forging process creates a defect free bore and the most consistent chamber possible."

It is available stripped, with a low-profile gas block or front sight base. Wringing the most accuracy out of your rifle means having the best barrel possible, and the Daniel Defense barrel offers superb accuracy and long life. Daniel Defense rifles are known for accuracy; these outstanding barrels are one of the many reasons why.



Daniel Defense's 16-inch Government Profile barrel.

A GUN WITH THE GOODS

The Daniel Defense M4 Carbine V11 features this barrel profile, and it's a great defensive, competition or hunting rifle. KeyMod Rail System: Noveske's KeyMod rails and sections allow you to organize the accessories on your rifle in the manner you wish by adjusting placement and position. The Noveske NSR Handguard ($249) comes with a handguard, barrel nut, mounting screws, T25 wrench and instructions. This handguard accepts KeyMod sections that allow you to mount accessories where you want and move them easily, keeping the handguard free of unneeded accessory rails for a more comfortable grip. The lightweight handguard is made of hard coat anodized aluminum, so it won't add a bunch of bulk to your gun, and the KeyMod system allows you to quickly customize the system to your particular needs and wants. Even the long (16.7-inch) handguard weighs less than 10 ounces, but it's extremely durable and easy to use. You can purchase additional KeyMod sections with four or nine slots for $19.95 or $24.95, respectively.

For more info, go to ShopNoveske.com.

ANOTHER GUN WITH THE GOODS

CMMG's Mk4 T 5.56 rifles also come with the KeyMod system and have an MSRP of $999-$1,049. Find them at CMMGInc.com.



The Magpul Adaptable Carbine Storage stock.

MAGPUL ACS-6 STOCK /

WEBSITE: WWW.STORE.MAGPUL.COM / MSRP: $89.95

The Magpul ACS (Adaptable Carbine Storage Stock) offers six adjustment positions to fit any shooter and any situation, and an integrated storage compartment that's perfect for holding spare optic batteries, tools and the like.

It comes with a .30-inch rubber butt pad that is tough and provides a stable and slip-resistant shooting platform, and the tight tolerances mean there is almost no wobble in the stock. The top of the stock has a unique rollover design that is extremely comfortable enough for all-day shooting and offers a great cheek weld for precision shooting.

The base stock weighs under a pound, offers 3.3 inches length of pull (LOP) adjustment and is available in a variety of colors. Having the right stock makes a big difference in accuracy and shooting enjoyment, and the ACS-6 from Magpul is one of the best stocks available today. The anti-snag design prevents hang-ups on gear and other items.

TRAVEL IN STYLE

If you're going to own an AR, you need to be able to get it to and from the field safely.

Eagle Industries offers their M-16/AR-15 Discreet Rifle Case, which has a tough nylon exterior to protect your gun from all the bumps and bangs of travel. It also features five magazine pouches for carrying your gear, and the tough nylon straps are durable enough to last for years but comfortable enough for long carries.

The heavy-duty zipper keeps all your gear safely stored and the Discreet Rifle Case bag is lightweight and easy to store. If you're going to take your AR to a competition, the range or to the field while hunting, this is a great option. It's also a great gift for the AR owner. Available in a variety of sizes to accommodate rifles up to 42-inches in length.

Go to EagleTacticalSupply.com.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Brad Fitzpatrick, a new father, writes regularly for Engaged Media.

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■ Thompson practicing engaging hanging plates at 100 and 200 meters from behind cover with the X-1.

THE DO-EVERYTHING AR

ROCK RIVER LAR-8 X-SERIES X-1 RIFLE

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LEROY THOMPSON



■ A one-inch group fired on the torso of a law enforcement training target at 100 meters with Black Hills 168-grain Match ammo.

FOR QUITE A FEW YEARS, THE AR-15 HAS RANKED AMONG THE BEST-SELLING RIFLES IN THE USA. FOR SELF-DEFENSE, IT IS BY FAR THE CHOICE OF MOST. A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF SHOOTERS NOW USE IT FOR HUNTING AS WELL.

As much as I like the M4 version of the AR-15 in 5.56x45mm (.223) caliber, over the last few years I have become convinced that for many shooters the 7.62x51mm (.308) version of the AR offers greater versatility. I might qualify that by saying it's a better choice for reasonably experienced shooters. The 5.56 AR-15/M4 is handier, lighter and easier to shoot than the 7.62 version; so, for many purchasing a self-defense rifle, it will remain the best choice. For example, the LAR-8 X-Series evaluated in this article weighs about 9.5 pounds, while a typical AR-15 M4 will usually weigh in at around 7 pounds.

However, for the experienced shooter, who may already own one or more 5.56 M4s, the 7.62 version extends some distinct advantages. For one thing, it offers one rifle that can be used to hunt any game in North America and can still serve as a very effective combat rifle. Admittedly, a .300 Win Mag rifle might be better for the big bears, but quite a few have been taken with the .308.

The .308 AR also makes a much more effective long distance engagement/counter sniper rifle than the .223 AR. Generally, a bolt-action sniping rifle will be quite a bit more accurate than a self-loading rifle in the same caliber. However, a good AR-type .308 with good ammunition should allow effective shot placement to 500 yards or further. Military 7.62x51mm DMRs (Designated Marksman Rifles) have served well in the counter sniper role.



■ Right side view of the X-1; note that, though the ACOG scope appears to ride rather high, it actually allows a comfortable cheek weld with the X-1's stock.

The 7.62x51mm round will also put an opponent down much more reliably than the 5.56x45mm round. On the other hand, one can readily carry more rounds of 5.56x45mm ammunition than he can carry of 7.62x51mm ammunition.

I've tried various AR-type rifles chambered for the 7.62x51mm round and like those from Rock River quite well. Until testing the LAR-8 X-Series for this article, I had not fired this specific model. Following is what it showed me.

ITS FEATURES

This rifle has several factors that make me recommend it. One of these is its type of magazine. Various 7.62x51mm ARs use different magazines, some of which are relatively expensive to purchase. The LAR-8 rifles, however, use the FN FAL magazine, along with M-16/M-4 and AK-47 the most common magazines in the world. In my case, because I have a couple of FAL rifles, I already have a good supply of the magazines, but they can still be found for $15 or less at gun shows and gun shops that specialize in military-style rifles.

Among other features of the X-1 rifle that I like are the fluted, stainless-style HBAR barrel, which has been bead blasted and cryogenically treated to relieve stresses created during manufacturing and, thus, enhance accuracy. The fluting not only reduces weight but also helps dissipate heat. I'll admit that I like the Rock River Beast muzzle break because it looks aggressive. Its jagged teeth would work to break glass, though that is not a likely scenario. It certainly gives the rifle a "tactical" look, however.

The X-1 employs the Rock River Arms TRO-XL extended free-float rail, another aid to accuracy as pressure is not applied to the barrel. The gas block is low profile. A full-length Picatinny rail on top allows the mounting of an array of scopes. No side rails are present on the rifle, but QD (Quick Detach) ports are located at the front of the rail for attachment of short Picatinny rails for illuminators.

The selector/safety and magazine release buttons are standard for AR-type rifles, but the bolt release is different – in a good way. An ambidextrous L-shaped





■ Left side view of the X-1; note that the polymer magazine that comes with the Rock River is in place, but that standard FN FAL magazines will also work.

"... THE ROCK RIVER LAR-8 X-1 PROVED A QUALITY BATTLE RIFLE CAPABLE OF PERFORMING ANY TASK FROM HUNTING BIG GAME TO DEFENDING ONE'S PERSON OR HOME."

■ Rock River's effective and aggressive-looking "Beast" muzzle device. ■ A close-up of the Trijicon TA33R-9 Thompson chose to use with the X-1. Though the TA33R-9 is only a 3X optic, its chevron reticle allows very fast target acquisition at closer ranges and precise shooting at longer ranges. ■ The X-1's collapsible stock is very comfortable and solid when shooting and slides easily to the rear or forward as needed.







release lever just behind the magazine allows the quick release of the bolt after a new magazine is inserted. I have practiced whacking the standard AR-style bolt release with the palm of my hand enough times that I can do it quickly and naturally, but with practice, the Rock River style bolt release is very quick when hit with the thumb after thrusting home a fresh magazine.

The Rock River CAR stock on the model I tested is an excellent choice for this rifle. It deploys quickly for extending or collapsing and locks the butt securely in place. It incorporates a cheek piece of sorts on each side, and, best of all, for a .308 self-loading rifle, has a ribbed rubber butt pad to cushion recoil and prevent slipping on the shoulder. The rubber Hogue pistol grip is comfortable and hand-filling, and allows good control of the rifle when shooting or when holding the rifle with one hand during a magazine change.

A good free-floated barrel (as on the X-1) is a great aid to accuracy, but in my experience, the greatest aid is a good trigger. The Rock River two-stage trigger is a good one. I found it an aid to both slow shooting for precision at longer ranges and for faster shooting on multiple targets at closer range. The Rock River winter trigger guard is also a nice touch for use of the rifle with gloves.

I gave quite a bit of thought to what optical sight I wanted to use to test the





■ A close-up of the X-1's button magazine release and pull-down lever bolt release. Note the brass residue that accumulated on the brass deflector during shooting tests. ■ Left-side view of the X-1's controls; note the safety, which may be easily flicked to "Fire" with the thumb of the shooting hand. The pistol grip is well-shaped for comfort when shooting.

> **"THE X-1 EMPLOYS THE ROCK RIVER ARMS TRO-XL EXTENDED FREE-FLOAT RAIL, ANOTHER AID TO ACCURACY ..."**

Rock River. In the past on self-loading AR rifles, I have used some type of variable such as a 3-9X; however, because I was specifically testing the X-1 for its versatility, I decided to go with Trijicon's TA-33R-9 ACOG. I am a big fan of the ACOG (Advanced Combat Optical Gunsight), as it does not require batteries yet still has day/night capability. I use the USMC TA31RCO-M4CP on the M4 I use most often so am very used to the red chevron reticle on it and on the TA-33R-9. Admittedly, the TA-33R-9 is only a 3x30mm but I find that I can acquire it very fast for a quick shot at closer range and can use it quite well to 300 meters for more precise shooting. I have shot it reasonably well at longer ranges, but if I were going to use the X-1 for longer range shooting, I would probably choose a higher magnification scope.

One of the real boons of the ACOG line of scopes is that once they are zeroed at 100 meters, shots may be quickly taken at longer range just by using other aiming points on the scope. The reticle of the TA-33R-9 offers quick aiming capability to 600 meters. Note, that this reticle is ballistically calibrated for the 7.62x51mm cartridge. Also, the TA-33R-9 only weighs 11.6 ounces with the mount so it does not add unduly to the weight of the relatively heavy X-1 rifle. Also, for quick acquisition, the TA-33R-9 has long eye relief.

Finally, I have found in my own usage, but more importantly, the U.S. armed forces have found in hard combat usage, that the ACOG scopes are incredibly tough.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Rock River advertises that the X-1 will shoot One MOA (minute of angle),



■ The Rock River LAR-8 X-1 is a battle rifle, well suited for civilian self-defense or countersniper usage.

which means it is capable of shooting a one-inch group at 100 meters. That is normally the benchmark for an accurate rifle and is very good for self-loader. I wanted to test that claim.

I took along 80 rounds of CAVIM surplus 7.62x51mm and 40 rounds of Black Hills 168-grain .308 Match ammunition to try out the X-1. By the way, note that the CAVIM is true military surplus ammunition, while the Black Hills is true .308 commercial ammunition. Without going into a lengthy explanation about the differences, most rifles will shoot both interchangeably. I specifically wanted to shoot both to make sure both types functioned reliably – they did.

ROCK RIVER LAR-8 X-SERIES

ACTION: Locked breech semi-auto
CALIBER: 7.62x51mm NATO (.308 Winchester)
OVERALL LENGTH: 39 inches (with CAR Stock)
BARREL LENGTH: 18 inches, fluted stainless steel, 1:10 twist
WEIGHT: 9.5 pounds
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 20 rounds (FN FAL Mags)
SIGHTS: Picatinny rail, allowing various optics or BUIS (back-up iron sights)

I bought a couple of thousand rounds of CAVIM some years ago when it was common and the price was quite reasonable, especially compared to current prices. I normally use it to test reliability of a rifle and to get the group fairly close to on. Then, I switch to the Match ammo to get the scope where I want it. I also use the CAVIM sometimes to shoot at plates to test how well the rifle handles. That was my process for the X-1.

The Rock River fired all 120 rounds



without any problems. Once I had the ACOG zeroed at 100-meters, I fired for groups. It did shoot into a MOA, and it didn't – let me explain. As with some self-loading rifles I've tested that have a double-column magazine, point of impact varied by which side of the magazine the round was fed. As a result, if I fired a six-shot group, it was actually separated into two one-inch groups of three shots, each separated from the other, depending on which side of the magazine each round had fed. A three-shot group fired at 100 meters into the head of a law enforcement training target with the Black Hills Match ammunition went into a little over an inch, with two shots within .5 inches but with the third shot stretching the group to a little over an inch.

PROVEN QUALITY

Overall, the Rock River LAR-8 X-1 proved a quality battle rifle capable of performing any task from hunting big game to defending one's person or home. It handles quickly and allows its user to put a lot of shots on target without the need to break the shooting position due to its self-loading action.

Rock River makes quality rifles, but they are not cheap. MSRP on the LAR-8 X-1 is $1,800. A good optic will add quite a bit more. The Trijicon ACOG I used, for example, will cost more than $1,000.

For that investment, one gets a rifle that could serve as the only rifle needed. **TT**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Leroy Thompson, a regular contributor to Engaged Media, has trained and advised military and police special operations units around the world. He is also an author of more than 30 books.

FOR MORE INFO

ROCK RIVER ARMS, INC.
RockRiverArms.com
(866) 980-ROCK

MASTER CARBINE MARKSMANSHIP

GET FAST AND ACCURATE AT SHORT RANGE

BY BOB CAMPBELL / PHOTOS BY JODY LEWIS



COLTDEFENSELLC

■ While one shooter runs for cover, the other provides covering fire.

WORKING COPS, FROM THE OLD WEST TO THE LAPD, HAVE ALWAYS CARRIED SIDEARMS. SOME WERE FORMIDABLE; MANY HAD LIMITATIONS.

Savvy lawmen also kept short-barreled repeating rifles handy, such as the Winchester. Later, the Winchester .351 SLR and the Remington Model 8 were popular. Today, carbines are back in the saddle again. Critical events have made the patrol carbine a desirable complement to the peace officer's pistol and shotgun.

In the following story, we'll discuss the elements that will enable you to improve your carbine shooting skills.

THE CARBINE AGE

The complacent era in which police officers patrolled only with a pistol ended in the fire and smoke of such infamous incidents as the North Hollywood Bank Shootout and Columbine. By the same token, homeowners fearing invasions by gangs and takeover robberies have widely adopted the carbine. It may be a pistol-caliber carbine or an AR-15 rifle but it's sure to be more effective than a handgun.

Many agencies, and even private security, started adding rifles or pistol-caliber carbines to their list of approved tools following the 9/11 attacks. After all, it's likely that if terrorists engage in a firefight with American police officers, they'll be well armed, possibly outfitted with body armor, and capable of firing accurately at more than 100 yards. A pistol is next to useless in such a long-range fight against armored subjects.



■ If you deploy the carbine as a truck gun then realistic practice in deploying the carbine quickly should be undertaken.

HAND IN HAND
MARKSMANSHIP AND TACTICS

When using a carbine, maximize the advantages you have.

Take cover whenever possible to dominate the situation. Firing from cover with a braced position, you are not only much safer, you are far more accurate. You present a much smaller target for the bad guys (unless they have the high ground) and gain the bracing of the earth itself when you shoot from the prone position. Know how and when to use this skill.

Firing prone gives you much steadier aim. However, it also presents you with one key difficulty: you can't change positions as quickly as you can while standing, kneeling or sitting.

Remember, prone behind cover is great, unless the bad guys have an elevation advantage. In that case, if you're stretched out prone, then you present them with a big target.

In all cases, and with the modern AR-15 rifle, maintain control by keeping the support hand forward.



■ If you choose to use an optic, then master its use at all distances. The author is using a Red Dot sight on the Just Right carbine.

> **"THE COMPLACENT ERA IN WHICH POLICE OFFICERS PATROLLED ONLY WITH A PISTOL ENDED IN THE FIRE AND SMOKE OF SUCH INFAMOUS INCIDENTS AS THE NORTH HOLLYWOOD BANK SHOOTOUT AND COLUMBINE."**

Some say the need for a rifle is overstated. It's true; you won't need it often. But the counter to that argument is, when you do need a rifle, you need it critically. You endanger the public you serve when you don't have one in such situations.

The patrol rifle is far more versatile than the pistol or the shotgun. A well-chosen rifle is useful from conversational range to several hundred yards. Still, the key factor in successful operation of this weapon is the skill of the operator. When patrol rifles are introduced in many police agencies, they are assigned to officers after only minimal training. Many traditional police courses simply do not adequately address the problems the carbine was introduced to solve.

DIALED IN
KEYS FOR USING HOLOGRAPHIC SIGHTS

Holographic dot-type sights such as those produced by EOTech and Bushnell require the average shooter to learn some new skills.

When using one of these sights, shoulder the carbine quickly and find the little red dot in the scope. When the firearm is at the ready, focus on the threat. Keep both eyes open and a red dot will appear. When the red dot is superimposed over the target, fire.

MASTER MARKSMAN BASICS

There are many schools of thought about implementing the carbine, but the fact remains that you must master the basics of marksmanship before you can use the carbine well. Once mastered, a good shot can use this tool to keep the peace and resolve incidents involving deadly threat. Too many of us purchase a quality rifle and then don't learn to properly use it or maintain it. That's a waste of a good piece of safety gear.

There isn't anything mysterious about the carbine. If it's held properly, the trigger pressed properly, sights aligned, and follow-through respected, the shooter will hit the target. Proper training and practice limits misses. But practice must include more than basic marksmanship practice in which you shoot at stationary targets from defined ranges.

TRAIN AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT — IT DOES

Training scenarios should include:

instruction and practice in how to shoot at felons at close range; how to counter multiple threats; how to neutralize threats behind cover; how to target and hit partially exposed threats; how to stop threats in vehicles, and how to eliminate threats at long range. It isn't about shooting; it's about fighting. Take the weapon to the range and work it, shooting at different distances, stationary and moving targets, and using cover when possible.

I use long-range shooting to develop accurate shot placement – these shots aren't often needed, but use them as a training aid. Marksmanship is important, but so is cover and safety. You must remember that just because you have a rifle you're not impervious to small arms fire – your life depends on that fact. If you don't get hit, you've won the game!



COLTDEFENSELLC

■ At short range the marksmanship problem isn't severe, but control of the firearm is important.

UP THE ANTE

Master the basics of sight picture, sight alignment and trigger press before you move to effective defensive training. An NRA course is a great idea.

You should also understand how to maintain the firearm and keep it lubricated. You must practice malfunction drills. You should begin with a triple-checked, unloaded rifle and practice gripping the rifle, moving with the rifle, and becoming comfortable getting into different firing positions. There are a number of basic shooting positions to master to be effective with a carbine in a fight. Standing, kneeling, and prone must be thoroughly understood, as should firing around corners and from cover.

At the range, you're probably relaxed. Add some stress. Never forget that you are training to act quickly and decisively to save your life or the life of an innocent person. You are not just "plinking" at targets,



COLT DEFENSELLC.

■ The designated marksman often uses an optical sight.



COLTDEFENSELLC

■ This shooter is firing from the ground, presenting a small target.

NO COVER? NO WORRIES

There will always be situations when the bad guy is close and you do not have cover. When this happens, there is some danger that the threat may grapple with the long gun.

However, by keeping your weapon below eye level, you'll be able to see him or her make this move and react to it. Am I advocating that you train to use a carbine at extreme close range without even bothering to aim? Not exactly.

Our patrol carbine has much better balance and natural point than your handgun, and at 3-10 feet, firing below eye level can work. With the three-point attachment of the long gun, accuracy in quick, un-aimed fire is much better than with the handgun. Point with the front sight and remember that the bullet will impact high if placed on the navel as an aiming point, when you use only the front sight.

The carbine is a great multiplier of marksmanship. Solid hits can be made at great range, and rescue shots are possible with the carbine that would never be possible with a handgun. However, with this advantage comes the responsibility to master the firearm.

and if you think you are, you're in the wrong business. Your time training with your carbine should be all about learning to fight and win. That means you need to practice quick and accurate fire.

A LOOK AT SIGHTS

One of the most overlooked skills when using a long gun is quickly getting the gun into the firing position and acquiring the sights. Without these important skills, all else fails when a quick shot is needed. Most patrol carbines have standard aperture sights. Some of us use red dot sights and others use more powerful long-range optics. Each sight requires different techniques for acquisition and alignment.

Let's look at the different sight requirements for quick hits:

Aperture Sights - To aim quickly using aperture sights – and this applies to a shotgun with ghost ring sights as well – the rear sight should come to your eye first. Your cheek should be welded to the stock at the same time – even for shots at moderate range. The front sight is then pulled into the aperture. It will center itself for an accurate shot. That's the advantage of the aperture: Your eye naturally centers a post in the rear "circle," aperture or ghost ring. With a little practice, you can easily use an aperture sight on a carbine to make a very fast, accurate first shot.

Open Sights - With the traditional open sight often found on sporting rifles, "buck special" and "riot" shotguns and AK-47s, find the front sight first and then pull the front sight into the rear sight notch. Open sights are not as good as aperture sights for quick action but, with some practice, a skilled shooter can make them work.

Optical Sights - The proven method of getting into action with an optical sight is to shoulder the weapon rapidly and take a coarse sight picture over the top adjustment knob of the sight. Lining up on the target with this knob, you then quickly move to the center of the scope. With practice, you will find that this drill can be executed rapidly. An accomplished shooter with much practice may jump directly to the reticle. However, for most of us, the coarse sight picture drill works well. **TT**

CAN YOU SEE THE VALUE IN OPTICAL SIGHTS? 4 KEY FACTORS

Any agency or individual officer thinking of fitting a patrol carbine with optical sights should step back for a second and weigh the pros and cons of these devices.

1 A modern riflescope has many benefits but, contrary to popular belief, it will not automatically make you a better shot. We have a great love for gadgets, and the optical sight is a great gadget.

2 Some scopes, such as the Nikon M223, are rugged. However, it has drawbacks. It may be damaged in the trunk of a cruiser. You don't want to get into a fight with an inoperable scope.

3 Shooting well with a scope requires a lot of practice. Be sure that you want to put in that time before you invest in an optic. There are many advantages to an optical sight. In addition to the magnification that it provides, an optical sight is on a single plane, meaning there is no front and rear sight, only the sight reticule. As a result, it's much easier to focus on the target.

4 While we're at it, let's discuss magnification for a moment. Remember, a patrol carbine is not intended for the same kind of duty as a sniper rifle. That's why, for general issue, I suggest an optical sight with the lowest magnification – i.e. from no magnification to perhaps four power. Field of view is an issue, especially when you consider you may have to use your patrol rifle at anywhere from point-blank range to over 100 yards.





■ **The author if practicing with a personal .308. This rifle has been fitted with the MagPul accessory stock. The adjustment range is a welcome addition.**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Robert "Bob" Campbell is a writer in the firearms, personal defense and outdoors field with more than 4,000 published articles, columns and reviews. He has also written 10 books. Bob holds a degree in Criminal Justice and served for many years as a peace officer. His work spans subjects as diverse as history, psychology, ballistics and police procedure.

MUST-HAVE TACTICAL GEAR

THE GEAR YOU NEED TO STAY A STEP AHEAD OF THE COMPETITION

BY SEAN COOPER / PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURERS

YOU MAY HAVE ALL THE SUPPLIES IN THE WORLD, BUT IF YOU DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT SUPPLIES, YOU COULD BE IN FOR A TOUGH TIME.

Watches, hydration pouches and communication devices are three essentials everyone should bring along in the outdoors. It's hard to focus on your target, when you need to quench your thirst. Tactical watches do a lot more than tell time. They act as compasses and can help you with your shooting skills. And of course, communication is key.

We feature tactical gear items that will help your mind stay focused on what really matters: the task at hand. **TT**

5.11 TACTICAL / MODEL: H.R.T. TITANIUM WATCH / WEBSITE: 511TACTICAL.COM / MSRP: $315

THE H.R.T. TITANIUM WATCH PROVIDES durability, scratch-resistance and glare-free crystal face, and that's just the start of an impressive line-up of features. This rugged watch is specifically made for law enforcement personnel. Made to last using the highest quality materials, including titanium, it makes shooting on-the-fly easy: input your ballistic data, add your environmental data and you'll have your shooting adjustment in seconds.

SPECS
- Made for law enforcement
- Scratch-resistant
- Titanium case
- Lightweight



5.11 TACTICAL / MODEL: FIELD OPS WATCH / WEBSITE: 511TACTICAL.COM / MSRP: $108 to $240

DON'T LET ITS SIZE FOOL YOU. This is one powerful watch. 5.11 Tactical Field Ops Watch includes the SureShot ballistic calculator to make sure you're on target every time you shoot. Additionally, it has a laundry list of features, including second time zone, alarms, chronograph, countdown timer and hourly chime.

SPECS

- Digital compass and digital read readouts
- 2.2" high x 2.8" wide
- Includes SureShot ballistic calculator
- Features include second time zone, alarms, chronograph, countdown timer and hourly chime



CASIO /

MODEL: MEN'S GA100SD-8A G-SHOCK MILITARY WATCH / WEBSITE: GSHOCK.COM / MSRP: $110



CASIO G-SHOCK DIGITAL WATCHES ARE THE TOUGHEST watches you'll find on the market today. Casio's GA100SD-8A G-Shock Military Watch is up to the job. Made using an ultra-tough resin, this tough customer is ready for duty above or below the water line and water resistant down to 660 feet.

SPECS

- Military-inspired watch
- Anti-magnetic structure
- Auto LED Light with Afterglow
- Protective mineral crystal dial window
- Shock resistant
- Accuracy: +/- 15 seconds per month

Product Guide



TIMEX /

MODEL: MEN'S T499979J TIMEX EXPEDITION RUGGED RESIN /
WEBSITE: TIMEX.COM / **MSRP: $44**

MADE IN THE GOOD OLD US OF A, TIMEX is a household name you can trust in wristwatches and the standard by which all other are compared. This watch is made to last, featuring a black, round resin case. The INDIGLO Night-Light with Night Mode makes night ops as effective as day. Low light under water? No problem. The Expedition is water resistant to 165 feet.

SPECS

- Features analog-quartz movement
- Durable resin case, lightweight
- Includes INDIGLO Night-Light
- Water resistant up to 165 feet
- Rugged outdoor design



CASIO /

MODEL: G-SHOCK GA110 X-LARGE COMBINATION WATCH - MILITARY /
WEBSITE: GSHOCK.COM / **MSRP: $120.00**

WE LOVE THE DURABILITY OF CASIO G-SHOCK watches so much, we thought we'd feature another one. Made of ultra-durable resin, the G-Shock X-Large Combination Watch - Military is made to last. It has a slew of features, including hourly time signal, four daily alarms, snooze alarm and countdown timer. Take this watch deep-sea diving up to an impressive 650 feet.

SPECS

- Water resistant up to 650 feet
- Adjustable band
- Shock resistant
- Magnetic resistant
- Available in a variety of color combinations

TIMEX /

MODEL: EXPEDITION MILITARY FIELD BRASS BROWN WATCH /
WEBSITE: TIMEX.COM / **MSRP: $53**

WHETHER YOU'RE HUNTING IN THE FOREST or in the cockpit of a B-17, this is your watch of choice. Timex Expedition Military watch has a laundry list of features you've come to expect from Timex, including INDIGLO Night-Light for easy nighttime display. Its protective mineral glass crystal dial window ensures it'll stay safe when you need it most.

SPECS

- Protective mineral crystal dial window
- Features buckle closure
- INDIGLO Night-Light for nighttime reading
- Water resistant up to 165 feet
- Also available in other colors/styles





MOTOROLA /

MODEL: MH230R 23-MILE RANGE 22-CHANNEL FRS/GMRS TWO-WAY RADIO /
WEBSITE: MOTOROLA.COM / **MSRP: $60**

These aren't the walkie-talkies you're used to using as a kid. Motorola radios are perfect for tactical training, fishing trips and just about any place where two-way communication would come in handy. These units last an impressive 10 hours on rechargeable batteries, so they'll be powered up and ready when you are.

SPECS

- Lasts 10 hours on rechargeable batteries
- Features 11 weather channels
- Up to a 23 mile range
- Comes with two radios, two belt clips and one dual drop-in charger



MOTOROLA /

MODEL: MR350R 35-MILE RANGE 22-CHANNEL FRS/GMRS TWO-WAY RADIO /
WEBSITE: MOTOROLA.COM / **MSRP: $80**

When you need to reach and touch someone, a Barrett .50 serves quite well. This could be frowned upon when you simply trying to get their attention though. Motorola has the solution for longer distance communications with the introduction of the Mortorola MR350R. This 35-mile range radio features 22 channels with an impressive 121 privacy codes to keep your tactical plans a secret.

SPECS

- 35 mile range
- Features 11 weather channels
- 22 channels
- 121 privacy codes



MIDLAND /

MODEL: GXT1000VP4 UP TO 36 MILE TWO-WAY RADIO /
WEBSITE: MIDLANDUSA.COM / **MSRP: $90**

Do you copy? Roger, roger. If you're looking for an under $100 radio, you can't go wrong with GXT1000VP4. It has a host of impressive features, including SOS siren, weather scan and dual watch. Group call lets you make calls to one of your buddies without alerting everyone monitoring the frequency (perfect for tactical training exercises).

SPECS

- Features 50 channels
- Up to 36-mile range
- Comes with 120V charger
- Includes 285 privacy codes
- NOAA weather alert radio



OLYMPIA /

MODEL: R SERIES R500 42-MILE WATERPROOF FLOATING TWO-WAY RADIOS /
WEBSITE: OLYMPIAPRODUCTS.COM / **MSRP: $100**

Loose lips sink battleships. You won't have to worry about someone eavesdropping on your conversation with the Olympic R Series R500 Radio. This two-way radio comes with a built-in LED flashlight, perfect as an emergency light source. Not only is it waterproof, it actually floats. This comes in handy if you drop your radio in the river.

SPECS

- 42 mile range
- Waterproof
- Built-in LED flashlight
- 50 channels
- 3-year warranty



TETON SPORTS /

MODEL: TRAILRUNNER 2.0 HYDRATION BACKPACK /
WEBSITE: TETONSPORTS.COM / **MSRP: $30**

Stay well-hydrated with the Trailrunner 2.0 Hydration Backpack from Teton Sports. Staying hydrated is essential whether you're training in the outdoors or at the shooting range. This lightweight backpack provides plenty of water with its 70-ounce hydration bladder.

SPECS

- 70-ounce hydration bladder
- Lightweight
- Easy access to main pocket for bladder
- Includes simple Velcro closure to keep dirt away



CAMELBAK /

MODEL: CLASSIC HYDRATION PACK /
WEBSITE: CAMELBAK.COM / **MSRP: $59**

When it comes to hydration packs, CamelBak quenches your thirst. The Classic Hydration Pack from CamelBak keeps you well-hydrated. A key to any survivor situation. CamelBak's Classic Hydration Pack features a pocket to store your most important tools including a spare magazine, multi-tool, or keys. Not only is it lightweight, it's breathable; making it perfect for humid days in the outdoors.

SPECS

- Features convenient elastic cord system
- Essentials pocket space
- Nylon
- Reflectivity



CONQUER /

MODEL: 2L HYRDRATION BACKPACK W/ BPA FREE BLADDER /
WEBSITE: AMAZON.COM / MSRP: $70

Conquer your next tactical training expedition with the Conquer 2L Hyrdration Backpack w/ BPA Free Bladder. Conquer's 2L Hyrdration Pack is lightweight, perfect for carrying around outside, and features a mesh harness for added back support. Conquer included reflective piping for added visibility. This won't serve well for certain real-world applications, but for training or even when trying to blend in with an urban environment of joggers, bikers and pedestrian traffic, it is perfectly suited.

SPECS
- Made of 600D Nylon
- BPA-Free Bladder, 2 liters
- Reflective piping for nighttime visibility
- Includes lightweight mesh harness



CAMELBAK /

MODEL: THERMOBAK 3L /
WEBSITE: CAMELBAK.COM / MSRP: $85

CamelBak's flagship model is likely the ThermoBak 3L hydration pack. CamelBak products are battle-tested, so you can rest assured they'll perform when you need them most. Not only is this hydration pack ergonomically designed, it holds up to 100 ounces of water. With low infrared reflective materials, it provides a layer of safety when visibility is key to safety during nighttime use.

SPECS
- Holds up to 100 ounces
- Zippered front access panel
- Ergonomically designed



CAMELBAK /

MODEL: OMEGA HYDROTANIUM REPLACEMENT RESERVOIR /
WEBSITE: CAMELBAK.COM / **MSRP: $30**

Staying well hydrated while you're on the go shouldn't be a hassle. CamelBak's Omega HydroTanium Replacement Reservoir makes quenching your thirst easy. The patented Hydroguard keeps you safe from the most common bacteria and fungus. The Big Bite Valve makes it easy to gulp water and quench a mighty thirst in seconds.

SPECS

- Patented Hydroguard protects you bacteria
- Lifetime warranty
- Leak proof and durable reservoir
- Big Bite Valve for easy access



TACSHIELD /

MODEL: MODULAR HYDRATION BLADDER POUCH /
WEBSITE: TACSHIELD.COM / **MSRP: $42.99**

TacShield's Modular Hydration Bladder Pouch is all about durability, flexibility and functionality. It's rugged enough to handle whatever terrain and foliage you need to bust through. The bladder holds an impressive 100-ounces of water to keep you well hydrated through long hikes with enough leftover to help a buddy or a four-legged companion. Rows of MOLLE provides extra lockdown and lash points for additional gear or clothing.

SPECS

- Holds up to 100 oz.
- Made of nylon
- Features convenient external flap
- Durable

MIDLAND / MODEL: : TH2 TACTICAL ACTION BOOM MIC WITH PTT /

WEBSITE: MIDLANDUSA.COM / **MSRP: $100**

COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ability to effectively communicate in the field with limited movement are key. Midland's oversized push-to-talk button makes communicating easy as can be – even when you're wearing gloves. The microphone is top quality and able to transmit the quietest of sounds loud and clear.



SPECS

- Easy push to talk feature
- Oversized tactical PTT button
- Sensitive boom mic
- Tactical action boom mic



TENQ /

MODEL: PROFESSIONAL TACTIQUE MILITARY POLICE THROAT MIC /
WEBSITE: AMAZON.COM / **MSRP: $46**

HAVE YOU EVER DREAMED OF BEING A PART OF ONE OF the government's most respected security forces? We can't help you there, but you can use some of the same technology as the Secret Service. This product provides the utmost in sound quality. Since the mic transmits directly from your throat, you'll never have to worry about background or excessive hand movement again.

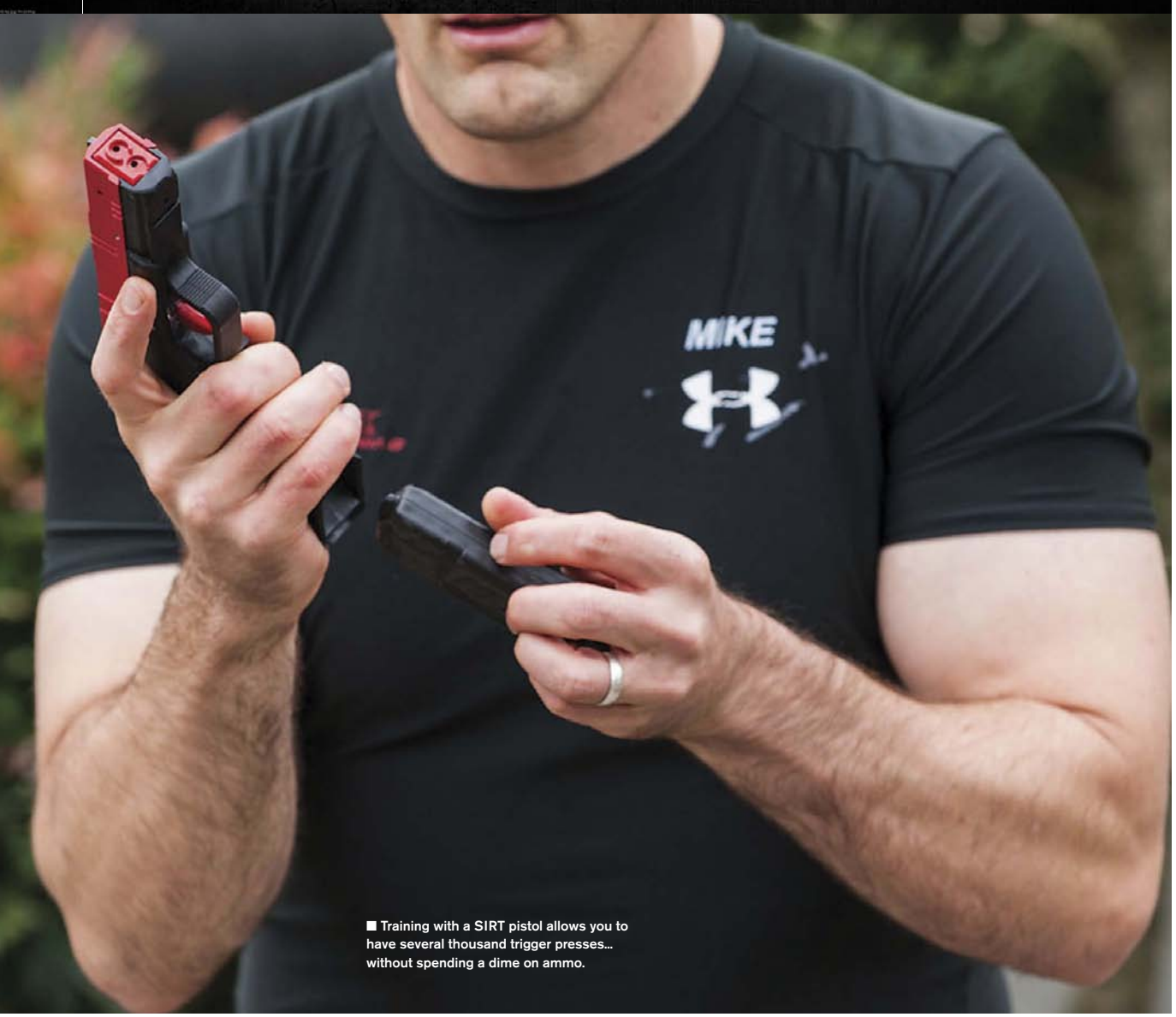
SPECS

- Large push to talk button
- Added finger push to talk button
- High-quality tube
- Discrete

SURVIVE A GUNFIGHT

SIRT, A SMART ALTERNATIVE TO LIVE FIRE TRAINING, ENHANCES MULTIPLE ASPECTS OF YOUR SHOOTING GAME

BY RICHARD CRAYS



■ Training with a SIRT pistol allows you to have several thousand trigger presses... without spending a dime on ammo.

YOU NEED TO TRAIN AS IF YOU INTEND TO SURVIVE A GUNFIGHT, EVEN CONSIDERING THE HIGH COST OF AMMUNITION OR THE LIMITED AVAILABILITY.

Over that last two years, I've used what I consider to be one of the best, most efficient training tools for shooters ever, to address simulated live fire and more.

For the price of a case of ammunition, you can have several thousand trigger presses in the comfort and warmth of your own recreation room. You can mess with the cat too.

Several years ago, I was at the annual training conference for the International Association of Law Enforcement Firearms Instructors when I came across a vendor talking about NextLevel Training's SIRT Training Pistol (NextLevelTraining.com).

Well, actually, I came upon a guy pointing a pistol at the target he had hung on the seam of the ceiling tiles and wall about 30 yards away, as he marked them with a laser from the pistol. The vendor was doing more demonstrating than talking. But it was eye-catching, which led to talking. The pistol had two lasers; the trigger reset after every shot and looked exactly like (sort of) a Glock 17. Well, being the consummate trainer and a true gadget aficionado, I had to find out more.

THE WAY SIRT WORKS

The first laser serves as a trigger prep or take-up indicator. As pressure is applied to the trigger, this laser shows the coach what the gun is doing prior to, during, and after the trigger break. It is calibrated to mark just under where the



■ The author uses SIRT pistols for a number of classes, including youth and concealed carry. Above is Mike Hughes, of NextLevel Training.



"... THEY WERE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THE MECHANICS OF KEEPING THE GUN HIGH IN A SEARCH."

natural sight alignment occurs. This keeps the shooter from using the laser as the aiming device instead of the sights. I immediately saw the benefit this would have in diagnosing a variety of problems, ranging from anticipation to milking the grip. In a live-fire coaching session, both problems are found through a trial-and-error process and might cost as many as 50 rounds to identify.

The second laser, which activates only when the trigger breaks, and deactivates once the trigger reaches reset, is calibrated to hit a spot directly in line with the sights. When the shot breaks, if it looks like a dash or checkmark instead of a dot, you know that you jerked/slapped the trigger or that your reset was less than perfect. This second laser, in conjunction with the take-up laser, is invaluable in identifying trigger control, support hand pressure and breathing problems, as well as the more common issues of anticipation and follow-through.

That day, I probably put 100 trigger presses on the demonstration piece and ordered a Test and Evaluation pistol. I then put another 1,000 presses on the T&E gun and had every trainer and student I could find put it through a series of drills to see if I could find a problem with the gun. I couldn't believe how well it stood up to the use. I still have that T&E and have replaced the batteries once at about 50,000 trigger presses. But if you are a serious coach, it isn't just about trigger presses alone.



■ The author has also had students work with SIRT pistols who were struggling with recoil.

The pistol comes with a solid plastic magazine that was weighted to replicate a full magazine. The rail on the frame accommodates most current weapon lights and fits without any difficulty in holsters made for the Glock 17/22. And as the Glock 17 and 22 are probably the most ubiquitous handguns today, it's perfect as a training pistol for the masses. A note here: the Pro model comes with a red laser and a green laser. You can change which color responds to which pressure by unscrewing the slide/cover and switching the plugs for the lasers.

SIRT APPLICATIONS

Initially I substituted the pistol for a real one with students who seemed to be struggling with either the noise or recoil. This accommodated quick analysis of the grip and trigger finger placement, and allowed for coaching without having to talk over the noise of the shots. Considering the success I was having with problem students, I wondered what would happen if I started all students out with the device. As you may have guessed, it was a great success for all of the shooters.

Next, I realized that by using the SIRT pistol in the lecture portion of basic marksmanship classes, the students got a very visual representation of trigger reset. This technique made learning the concept much easier for everyone. I motored along, touting the benefits of this training pistol for about a year, using it to train new, basic shooters. Then, I stumbled across another use!

I was teaching a concealed carry class and had my bag of training aids with me. While talking about making an appendix draw from a concealed holster and the need for safety and practice, particularly from the seated position, one of the students asked the simplest of questions, "Why is this draw dangerous?" Ah, a visual learner was he? Without thought, I

DIY
ALL MODELS COME WITH A NEXTLEVEL TRAINING DVD.

SIRT PRO TRAINING PISTOL

- Red metal slide
- Dual Lasers: green Shot Indicating Laser and red Trigger Prep Indicating Laser
- Functional features of Glock 17/22.
- Standard sights and one weighted training magazine (order two extra for reloading drills)
- MSRP: $439





SIRT PRO TRAINING PISTOL WITH PURPLE SLIDE

- Purple metal slide
- Inert dual laser system is best suited for outdoor training in a variety of lighting conditions (the green Shot Indicating Laser is 20 times more powerful than the red laser)
- Functional features of Glock 17/22.
- Standard sights and one weighted training magazine
- MSRP: $439

reached for the SIRT and put it in the holster. "Watch the laser as I make the draw and see what parts of my body the muzzle covers as I move it from holster to threat." Ah ha! Another application for this very versatile tool.

A few weeks later, I was teaching team tactics to a large group of peace officers. We were working formations down hallways and stairwells when I noticed several of the officers were watching a "threat zone" while pointing their blue guns in another direction. I mentioned this problem to them. Both officers disagreed, believing that they were keeping their guns pointed to the threat zone.

I grabbed all four of the SIRTs (over the year I had increased my collection) and put one in every officer's hand. I had them repeat the drill and when I said, "Press," they were to touch the trigger lightly without moving the pistol. What did we find? Two of the officers were pointing the gun down instead of at the threat zone. This was a key learning moment for all of us: For them, they were able to understand the mechanics of keeping the gun high in a search. For me, I realized that I was under-utilizing this valuable tool.

HOW I USE SIRTS NOW

Basic marksmanship courses, ladies-only handgun, youth safety courses, concealed carry, reactive shooting and couples' home defense training are my primary venues of deployment with the SIRT. Why home defense training? The realistic training you get from moving room to room in your own home while tracking muzzle motion, hits to threats, and the safety this device affords cannot be matched by anything else.

For instance, using two of the SIRT pistols, I walk couples through team searches of their house. This shows them how to function best together to look for threats as they make their way to the children's rooms, respond to home invasion teams or look for the source of the breaking glass. With the SIRT pistols, I can track inadvertent trigger contact and the homeowners can see 'hits' on the targets (staged throughout the house before the session started). Benefits include no pellets to pick up (as with the AirSoft pistols I previously used for this training), no tiny dents in the door or sheetrock (not all of the couples were accurate shots when stress levels went up) and no one has to wear safety



glasses or neck protection (which defeats realism). Heck, with SIRTs, they can repeat the drill in their pajamas … after I leave!

HIGH FUNCTIONALITY

What else can you do with this pistol? Practice your presentations, reloads, trigger control, unconventional shooting positions, reactive shooting, combat focus, scenarios with live role plays (protective eyewear for role players recommended, even though the lasers are only 5mW, safety always comes first), weapon transitions and multiple threat engagement training all come to mind.

MORE OPTIONS

So, is that it? Nope. Last year, NextLevel Training (NLT) released the SIRT-AR Bolt. It replaces your bolt carrier with the SIRT-AR Bolt, and you can train with a self-resetting trigger that activates a shot-indicating laser in your rifle. Done in a few minutes, the process is simple and you don't need an armorer. Just push the rear takedown pin to the open position and let the receiver drop forward. Remove the bolt carrier group, insert the SIRT-AR Bolt and trigger bar, close the takedown pin, and you're ready to train!

Now you can do all the drills you want, with both guns, in your rec room, every night! Does life get better?

At about $440 per pistol and $200 per AR Bolt, you get each for the price of a case of ammo and 50,000 trigger presses as the bargain. What are you waiting for? **TT**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Richard Crays was a Marine general's driver and embassy security guard before going into police work at 22 years old. During the last 32 years, in addition to being a SWAT sniper, he has been an FTO, a motorcycle officer, a DRE, a firearms/defensive tactics/EVO instructor, Chief of Investigations and Chief of Police.

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